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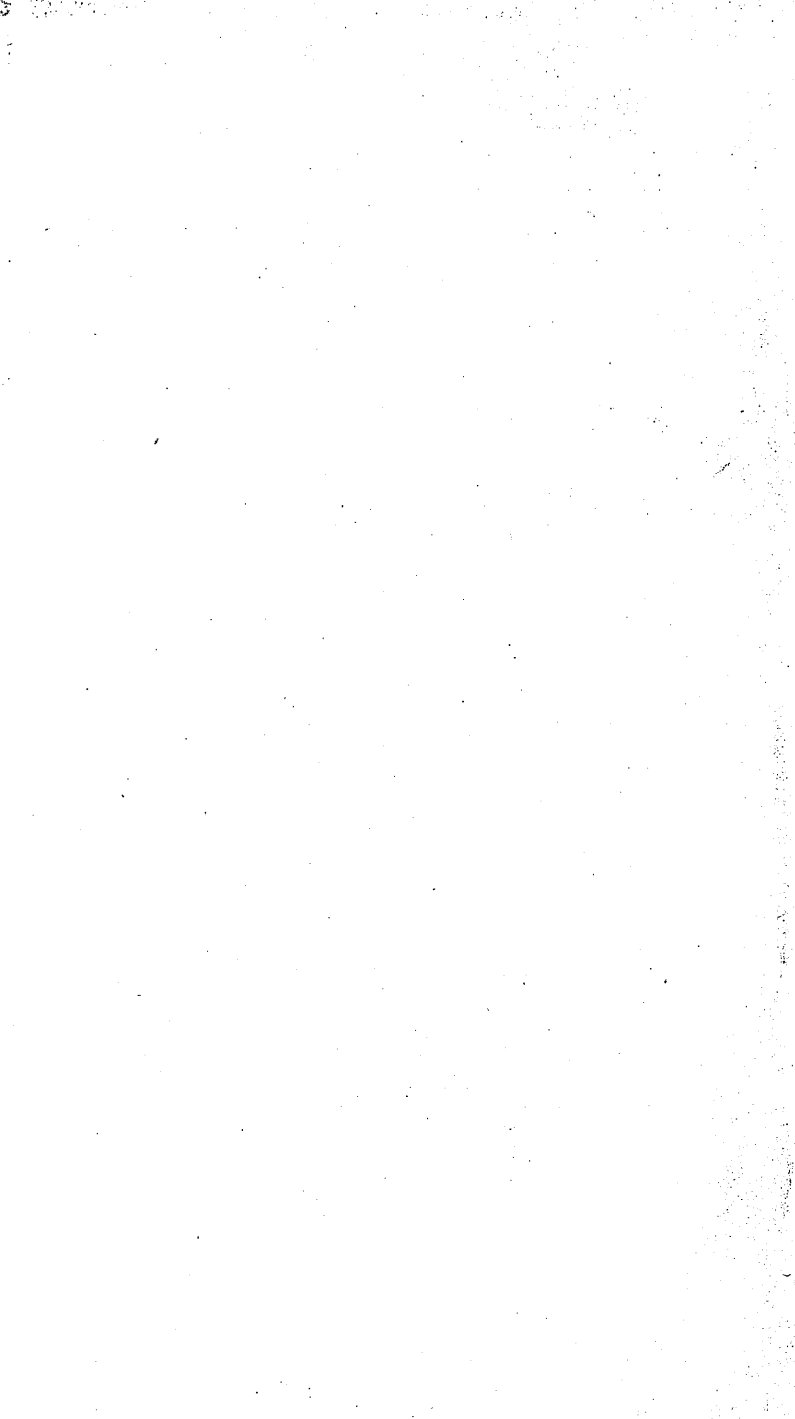
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EGOISM: A STUDY IN
THE SOCIAL PREMISES
OF RELIGION

BY
LOUIS WALLIS
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TO
G. H. T.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED



PREFACE

This essay falls naturally into three parts, taking its main title from the first.

The thesis of the first division is not in any sense original, although the treatment possibly has points of novelty. The idea that all human activity is either directly or *indirectly* egoistic, or selfish, is not new. We lay this down as a universal fact of history in the proposition: "Egoism is the only 'force' propelling the social machine."

The second and largest part of the essay illustrates this proposition from a quarter which, we maintain, offers the most dramatic evidence in its favor — biblical history. We hold that the Bible, interpreted from the standpoint of so-called higher criticism, brings us more directly and vividly into relation with the fundamental facts of personality (i. e., the struggle of the ego for life) than anything else. The egoistic proposition is within the domain of *sociology*; and if we would grasp the significance of the Bible, we must approach it, first of all, as a *social* phenomenon. The logical ultimate of higher criticism is, that the total body of religious conception in the Bible arose out of, and in dependence upon, the so-called secular experience of Israel. The critical movement has been approaching this position for some time, although deficient sociological insight has impeded its progress. There is nothing anomalous about the

sociological deficiency of biblical scholarship, for the biblical higher criticism itself is but a part of that wider historico-critical movement which is a necessary antecedent of sociology. The order is not: sociology; *then*, criticism. It is the reverse. The critical movement at large clears the way for true historical insight, and thus (among other factors) helps to make possible a science of sociology. There is then a halt while certain men are deployed in order to become familiarized with the social process *per se*. Then the sociologists return to modify the critical movement, whereupon the entire intellectual process is ready to advance another stage.

And this is the point that we of today have reached. The higher criticism of the Bible seems to have taught us all it can. Of late years there has been a period of waiting, with no apparent progress. We are in a peculiar situation. Not only has the older view of the Bible lost ground; but the new view, despite the exertions of its defenders, does not associate itself with a quickening of the popular faith. What is called "reverent modern scholarship" thinks that all we need is to recover the standpoint of ancient creative prophecy, in the Old and New Testament alike, and then apply its ethical messages to the present. But the church, the official embodiment of religion, meets progressive loss of influence and enthusiasm. Do present conditions mean that there is, then, no ground for enthusiasm, and no object for faith? We think not. The critics charge the situation to the conservatives; while the con-

servatives, on the other hand, are quite sure that the critics are responsible for the whole business.

It is certain that the biblical higher criticism has come to stay. It will be a presupposition of future thinking. As Dr. C. F. Kent, Yale professor of biblical literature, well says: "The conclusions [of criticism] are not those of an individual, nor of a school, nor even of one generation of scholars. They are based not on theories, nor on the often fanciful traditions of Jewish rabbis or early church fathers, but on the solid basis of facts presented by the Old Testament books themselves. They are in turn substantiated by the independent testimony of history and comparative literature. It is safe, therefore, to regard them as no longer on trial or under suspicion, but rather as the foundations—as sure as enlightened human insight and scientific method can discover—upon which Old Testament interpretation and doctrine are in the future to rest."¹

But, in the face of the triumph of criticism, the strictures upon the reigning school on behalf of conservatism by Professor James Robertson, of the University of Glasgow, remain profoundly true. "The modern theory," says this writer, "is strong in minute analysis, but weak in face of great controlling facts. . . . Nabiism, or the prophetic activity, even Yahwism itself, are borrowed from the Canaanites or Kenites; and when it is asked why the Canaanites or Kenites did not reach the same truth that Israel attained, we get no answer. And when we ask what then had

¹ Kent, *The Beginnings of Hebrew History* (New York, 1904), p. 29.

Israel to distinguish it, the feeble answer is returned that when Israel (for no reason stated) assumed Yahweh as their national deity, they also resolved and were told that He (for no reason assigned) was to be their only God. And when the undoubtedly pure and high conceptions entertained by the prophets are pointed out, and an explanation demanded of their origin, we are told that a 'conception' was 'absorbed' by the prophets and came out in this purified form. The theory itself is clear and thorough enough, and of course it hangs together as a whole. But it does not hold the parts together, because it does not supply the proper nexus that unites them in an orderly historical development. There must be a bond of a more vital fibre, a force more deeply inherent, which the modern theory has not penetrated to nor unfolded, to account for a religious and spiritual movement which, looking to the broad field on which it is displayed and the diversified circumstances under which it took place, is nothing short of majestic. The self-styled 'higher' criticism is indeed not high enough, or, we should perhaps more appropriately say, not deep enough for the problem before it."² These points are well taken, and have not been answered. And because modern criticism has not met them, Robertson denies its validity. Although a trifle shaky from the standpoint of ultra-conservatism, treating the first eleven chapters of Genesis a little more freely than was allowed a century ago, he becomes safely

² Robertson, *The Early Religion of Israel* (New York), Vol. II, pp. 230 f.

orthodox with Abraham, and concludes that "from the 12th chapter of Genesis onwards, we have a credible and trustworthy account."³

To the same effect is the criticism of Henry Preserved Smith's recent work on Old Testament history,⁴ by E. E. Nourse, of the Department of Biblical History and Theology in Hartford Theological Seminary. While making generous acknowledgment of the scholarly quality of the book, the author's full acquaintance with the vast and varied literature of the subject, and his mastery of the critical problems involved in the sources, the reviewer well says of this history: "Its fatal defect is that it leaves Israel's religion wholly unaccounted for. On the basis of Dr. Smith's presentation, Amos and Hosea and Isaiah are enigmas. Israel's religious conceptions, up to the age of Amos, having been but little removed from ordinary Semitic polytheism, the subsequent remarkable teachings of prophecy demand a far more complete explanation than they get at Dr. Smith's hand."⁵

Not until the higher criticism is modified by sociology shall we reach finally valid results in biblical interpretation. This book attempts to exhibit our sacred literature as an involution of the social process. The writer has already treated the same subject, from a different standpoint, in the course of his "Examination of Society," part

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 247 f.

⁴ H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History* (New York, 1903).

⁵ *Hartford Seminary Record*, February, 1904, p. 140.

of which book was published in the *American Journal of Sociology* (May, 1902). The present essay is not a rewriting of the section of the earlier work dealing with Israel. It is a fresh study of the field, and stands independent of the other book.⁶

The third and final part of this essay attempts to show its practical bearing on the present social problem.

It is both a pleasure and a duty to acknowledge the kindness of Dr. Albion W. Small, Head of the Department of Sociology in the University of Chicago, who has opened the *American Journal of Sociology* to the writer, and has also assisted him to find publication at the University Press. While Dr. Small agrees with the general position here taken in reference to historical criticism and sociology, the writer has no desire even to appear to commit him to any of the special ideas in exegesis and social technology held by the author of this treatise.

The larger part of the book has been read in manuscript by Dr. J. M. P. Smith, of the Semitic Department in the University of Chicago; and

⁶ The following may be quoted from the late Dr. A. B. Bruce, of the Free Church College, Glasgow, as a straw indicating the present direction of the wind: "The creation of Israel, like the creation of the world, may have been a much more complicated process than it appears in the sacred page; and *the secular history of the process* [italics mine], if it could be written, might assume a very different appearance in many respects to the biblical, just as the scientific history of the physical creation differs widely from that given in the first chapter of Genesis." — Bruce, *Apologetics* (New York, 1899), p. 197.

the chapter entitled "The Revolution (*continued*)" has been added in response to his much-appreciated criticism. A number of important changes in details of expression have been kindly suggested by Dr. A. E. Davies, of the Department of Philosophy in the Ohio State University. My attention was first called to egoism as a universal informing principle of human action by my friend, Herbert B. Harrop.

The new treatise, *General Sociology*, by Dr. Small, was published too late for reference in our text. It has large bearing on all the propositions advanced in this book; and will at once take its place as a standard sociological work.

L. W.

COLUMBUS, OHIO,
October 1, 1905.



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"To do the best for others is finally to do the best for ourselves; but it will not do to have our eyes fixed on that issue." — Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

"Under social conditions, personal welfare depends on due regard for the welfare of others. . . . Each higher species, using its improved faculties primarily for egoistic benefit, has spread in proportion as it has used them for altruistic benefit." — Spencer, *Data of Ethics*.

"Those communities which contain the greatest number of most sympathetic members flourish best." — Darwin, *The Descent of Man*.

"The egoistic basis of altruism is the great moral paradox." — Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*.

"The thoughts and feelings and purposes that make possible the best life of mankind are rarely traced to their true source. Genuine egoism is perfected through genuine altruism. Selfhood comes to its best in love." — Gordon, *Ultimate Conceptions of Faith*.

"Normal egoism is not abstract individual self-assertion, but the self-realizing pulse of a consciousness that includes its other; nor on the other hand is altruism pure abstract otherness, but a pulse of other-realization in which self is included. The form of egoism which we call selfishness or self-seeking arises only when some subject-self attempts to ignore the objective side of the dialectic in its feelings or life-aims." — Ormond, *Foundations of Knowledge*.

"This problem [of ethics] is the realization of the Self, in social relations with other selves, and in accordance with a consciously accepted ideal." — Ladd, *Philosophy of Conduct*.

I

INTRODUCTION

This essay attempts to show that exploration of the field of sociology discovers the terms of the religious and philosophical problem. In other words, it claims that philosophy and religion meet on sociological ground. It is a study along lines familiar and out of the common. In the first place, it points out, as previous writers have shown, that all human conduct is rooted in egoism; and that altruism is a disguised or indirect form of egoism. From this it goes on to show that the sacred literature of our western society has obtained its pre-eminence because it gives the best historical expression to egoism in general. In connection with the last proposition, it shows (or tries to show) that the religious life and doctrine of the Bible developed in a purely "natural" way, in strict relation to the sociology of the Old and New Testaments—

i. e., without the aid of an objective revelation in the old, mythologic sense.

In an earlier work the writer undertook an inquiry into the structural and functional aspects of society.¹ That work approached the subject from the standpoint of conceptions which threw men into the background of institutions. The present essay attempts the reverse. The individual is put into the foreground; and the forces are examined which move below the social surface. The study of institutions, as such, exhausts only one phase of sociology. Analysis of society carries us away from the individual into a great institutional plexus where people seem but the insignificant pawns of some vast, impersonal game; but every analysis of structure throws us back on the personal units composing the aggregate. The goal of effort is continually turning out to be the point of departure. We begin, and we end — with the individual.

¹ *An Examination of Society* (1903), preceded by "The Capitalization of Social Development" in the *American Journal of Sociology*, May, 1902.

II

THE EGOISTIC PROPOSITION

We lay down at the outset a proposition variously phrased as follows: That form of conduct which is commonly termed "egoism," or "selfishness," is accurately described as *direct* selfishness or egoism; while that which, in contrast, is commonly called "unselfishness," or "altruism," is accurately described as *indirect* egoism or selfishness. According to this usage, egoism is generic in society, appearing concretely in one or the other form, immediate or mediate. Egoism is the only "force" propelling the social machine. Every human being, from birth to death, is animated by one or both forms of the fundamental egoistic impulse, and by this alone. It is impossible that conduct be anything else than egoistic. Conventional morality is right in affirming a contrast here; but it mistakes the nature of the contrast.

If the study of conduct is directed merely upon the motives acknowledged by the actor, then it would be difficult to establish the proposition laid down above. But it needs to be emphasized at the outset that no thoroughgoing study of conduct can proceed upon a mere probing of the individual's mental states.

Not only is egoism the fundamental human trait; but it is most commonly seen in the direct form. At the beginning of our existence we are all direct, or immediate, egoists. All the acts of a child of six months are on the lines of a direct outreach for satisfaction, regardless of the good of others. This being so, it follows that altruism is a later fact in life.

We have now to note how altruism (i. e., indirect egoism) becomes a fact in a world primarily ruled by egoism in the direct form. Although the first impulse of all living beings, animal and human, is toward action for the pleasure or good of self, without reference to the pleasure or good of others, yet there is ever present a force which, all-pervading and irresistible

as the pressure of the atmosphere, constrains each self to act for the good of others. This force is the pressure of the others themselves. We need but to look at the laws and customs of all races at all periods in order to realize how powerfully the self has been coerced by the others. It is a mere plain fact that a large part of the world's law, as well as of that vast body of custom having the force of law, is concerned with making the self either do things for the benefit of others, or abstain from acts hurtful to others.

We see, then, that if the world is full of selves, it is also full of others. We need to go outside the ego for the explanation of a large part of his conduct. Every ego has a double character: from his own immediate standpoint, he is merely self; but from the standpoint of his fellows, he is other.

Here we have the conditions of an unremitting struggle. Each ego, tending to pursue his own, direct interest, regardless of others, demands that the others turn aside from a similar course, and have re-

gard for *him*; and, at the same time, the others, likewise engrossed in their own ends, call upon him loudly to turn aside and have regard for them. Society is composed of selves who are quick to demand altruism, but slow to be altruistic.

Every phase of experience illustrates the tension between selves. The universal, and most popular, terms connected therewith are "good" and "bad." We call those people good who do as we desire; and those who disregard our wishes, and work against our interests, we call bad. We are not asking just here whether these terms are correctly applied; we are not trying to determine whether they are always used wisely and truly. We are simply remarking that, in the world-wide tension between self and other, the words "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong," etc., are actually applied to the matters at issue.¹

We have observed that goodness is primarily objective. It is called out, in

¹ We frequently overlook the fact that these terms, instead of solving social problems, merely raise new problems.

the first instance, by forces external to the self—namely, by the pressure of the others. But altruism, thus originating, develops at length, in the course of history, into an element of character whose impulses are obeyed unreflectively by not a few. These people are good to others without pausing to consider the significance of their own conduct. They are, as we say, “good-hearted,” or “naturally good.” They practice goodness “for its own sake,” without reference to the final ends involved. Their inner nature—their heart—becomes good. Instead of responding to the pressure from without, they act according to a pressure from within. Goodness, primarily objective, becomes subjective.

Altruism, colored by emotion, is termed “love.” It is the overlaying of emotion upon altruism that results in love. We can be altruistic without an accompanying emotional reaction; but if emotion becomes a factor in altruism, then we are in love.

We have already observed that altru-

ism, although of beneficent intention, is not always wise and good. In the same way, love, the ultimate form of altruism, is not necessarily wise in all its inspirations. The religious teacher is correct in declaring love to be a desirable thing; but he is mistaken if he identify it with a concrete social program. Love is the form in which altruism advances most efficiently to its end—the balancing of the tension between selves in that which we call justice. Of course, we may have justice, partial or complete, without love; but love sharpens perceptions of the rights of others.

The egoistic nature of altruism is perceived gradually. Long after the general egoistic proposition has been accepted, there is difficulty with special points; but the whole situation at last becomes clear.

The significance of altruism as making for the greatest good of the greatest number of selves in a given aggregate has been treated by modern writers.² Darwin emphasized it as a great fact among ani-

² See quotations above.

mals and men.³ Those groups in which there is the most of sympathy and mutual aid are better fitted to survive in the struggle for life than those in which there is less altruistic co-operation.⁴ Herein lies the only justification of altruism. Other things being equal—i. e., if altruism is not carried to absurdity—the self has more chances in an altruistic society than in a community where the direct form of egoism prevails.

If you are glad to receive the benefits of an altruistic society (and who is not?), you must show a reciprocal altruism yourself—if need be, even to the point of absolute sacrifice of your physical life. Nothing less than this extreme is logical. Examples of absolute physical self-sacrifice are cited in disproof of the view that all conduct is rooted in egoism. But there is no great difficulty about this point. If the complete physical sacrifice of one or more lives is necessary to social integrity, that sacrifice will be accomp-

³ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, chap. 6.

⁴ Cf. Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chaps. II f.

lished in one or the other of two ways: either the self will offer himself willingly, or he will be made to do it by the pressure of the others. If he do it through outside pressure, he illustrates what we have called objective goodness. On the other hand, if he do it willingly, he is acting in response to an altruistic impulse (inborn or acquired) which forces him to obey it. Most altruism falls short of complete sacrifice, and furnishes a kind of social momentum which spurs the hero on to the limit.

Whether the altruist knows it or not, he is all the time demanding an equivalent from the others. By his own example, and by word of mouth, he exhorts you to do good to others; and he himself is among the others. Perhaps he does not consciously include himself among the others; but he cannot detach himself from them. He cannot exclude himself from the others in whose cause he seeks to enlist you. No altruist who declares that he is not selfish can escape this reduction to

absurdity. He can only say that he is not *directly* selfish or egoistic.

If these things are true, why should we not be honest about it, and admit that we are all selfish, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously? When we do an altruistic thing, we rather like to have the others declare that we are not selfish, do we not? And when we are told that our altruism is an indirect form of the fundamental selfishness, or egoism, common to us all, it irritates us, and threatens our secret sense of pleasure. Perhaps we frown on this view, and call it "base and ignoble," when it is nothing of the kind.

The first stages in perception of this truth involve, as a rule, a callow sort of disgust. The world seems to be reduced to a dead level of monotony. Interest and color appear to be taken out of life. Those noble souls who practice and preach what is called *un*-selfishness look like hypocrites; and humanity seems to be transformed into a race of materialists.

But persistence in study along this line,

with absolute honesty in facing the facts, be the facts what they may, results in a different attitude. It is slowly realized that the egoistic proposition is a report of real life in the simplest possible terms, and that it takes us directly into the heart of the great human problem. It exhibits men everywhere seeking the most abundant life, struggling for the utmost good. Perhaps the search is unwise; perhaps the struggle is foolish. Nevertheless, the universal object is to get what is thought to be good. In this world-wide struggle the paradox of altruism (or "indirect selfishness") plays an important part. The egoistic proposition emphasizes that personality and personal relations are the deepest and most serious things in the universe.

III

THE BIBLE AND EGOISM

As observed above, the egoistic proposition brings us face to face with the deepest and most serious matter—the problem of personality. It reveals a multitude of selves trying, wisely or unwisely, to live the most abundant life. When, therefore, we claim that the Bible gives better expression to the egoistic struggle for life than any other writings in the world, we are virtually saying that it brings us by the most direct and practical route into relation with the fact and the problem of personality. This is, of course, a purely sociological way of stating the significance of the Bible; but even the most literal “orthodox” cannot take exception, on sociological grounds, to this appraisal without also denying that personality is the foremost fact in the universe. In terms of religion, we might say that the Bible stands for the approach and

fellowship of God and man. But this is a study in sociology, confined (like all scientific inquiry) to phenomena, or things as they appeal to us through the senses; and from this standpoint we may speak of the Bible only in the terms used above.

Let it be clearly understood, then, that the treatment of the Bible here undertaken cannot inquire into the ultimate validity of its doctrine without leaving the ground appropriate to sociology. As we have elsewhere observed, "a work on sociology can have nothing to do with the validity of religious [theological] doctrine, for a discussion of the absolute content of the realities with which sociology deals carries us at once out of the domain of sociology."¹

In taking the Bible as the egoistic superlative, we are claiming it primarily for sociology. Unless the sacred literature of our western civilization is approached from the sociological standpoint, it will be largely misunderstood. We stand upon the proposition of the so-called "higher

¹ *An Examination of Society* (1903), Preface, p. 7.

criticism," which, when logically applied, affirms that the conceptions of the Bible spring from the natural, secular experience of certain oriental people. This is another way of saying that nothing occurred in the history of ancient Israel which does not take place in principle, and under modern forms, in contemporary life.

IV

ISRAEL'S RELIGION BEFORE THE EXILE

It is one of the most interesting discoveries of modern times that the religion of the Bible is a growth on the basis of religious conceptions common to all the ancient world. The facts about Israel's early religion must be cited in relation to these common ideas.

In primitive religion the gods were always members of society; and there was no essential distinction set up, as there has been in later times, between divinity and humanity. According to the belief and practice of their worshipers, the gods had as real a place in the social fabric as the worshipers themselves. "The social body," says Robertson Smith, "was not made up of men only, but of gods and men. The circle into which a man was born was not simply a group of kinsfolk and fellow-citizens, but embraced also cer-

tain divine beings, the gods of the family and the state, which to the ancient mind were as much a part of the particular community with which they stood connected as the human members of the social circle. The relation between the gods of antiquity and their worshipers was expressed in the language of human relationship, and this language was not taken in a figurative sense, but with strict literality. If a god was spoken of as father and his worshipers as his offspring, the meaning was that the worshipers were literally of his stock, and that he and they made up one natural family with reciprocal family duties to one another.”¹

It is not so important to know how and where primitive men got their ideas about the gods, as it is to know that they actually believed in the gods. Yet some reference to religious origins will be helpful to the present study. The most widespread form of early religion is worship of the

¹ W. R. Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (London, 1894), pp. 29, 30. Cf. Barton, *Semitic Origins* (New York, 1902), chap. 3.

family ancestors.² Good examples of this are found in the Romans, with their *lares* and *penates*, or gods of the household; and the Chinese, with their ancestral tablets. In view of this fact, there is nothing strange about the widespread belief in the actual, physical fatherhood of the gods. It has been shown by Rev. Duff McDonald, a Presbyterian missionary in central Africa, that all the prayers and offerings of the natives are presented to the spirits of important dead men. "It is here," he says, "that we find the great center of the native religion. The spirits of the dead are the gods of the living." Primitive people, in common with us all, dream that the dead are alive; and to the

² We do not mean to say that worship of the dead is the basis of religion. The *basis* of religion is in the human mind; while the *origin* of religion is a historical matter. The tendency of mind leading to personalization of objective nature is given specific direction by the experiences which, in all races at a certain level of culture, lead to worship of the dead — especially the heroic dead. "Religion is, in fact, a growth springing from the soil of human nature, but taking its shape and hue from the social medium. The science of religion is for this reason under a dual dependence, owing allegiance to psychology no less than to sociology."—Ross, *Foundations of Sociology* (New York, 1905), p. 17.

primitive mind the dream-world is an objective fact. Only those dead persons are worshiped who have been specially important and helpful in the flesh; and they are served in order to secure the good, or to avert the evil, which they are supposed to be able to send. Idols are at first part or all of the dead man's body. Egyptian gods, for instance, are often represented by a mummy. At a later stage in the development of religion, the idols are simply images. These manufactured idols acquire sanctity with age, becoming objects of increasing awe to later generations, who are frequently ignorant or confused about their real meaning.³

As already observed, the most widespread form of religion is worship of the family ancestors. But above these private worships there grew in ancient times a superstructure of public religion. Certain gods came to be recognized in common by whole clans, tribes, nations, or empires. The genesis of these more widespread

³ Grant Allen, *Evolution of the Idea of God* (New York, 1897), pp. 24 f. and 79 f.

cults is easily understood, for we can often see them in process on the field of ancient history. A strong tribe subjugates a number of weaker ones; and the god of this dominant tribe is thereupon acknowledged by all the tribes in common. Or, a number of tribes unite against their enemies; and the deity of the leading tribe is taken as the general, or national, god of all the tribes concerned. These wider worships do not in any way interfere with the narrower cults of the families, clans, and tribes embraced within the union.

The religion of Israel before the exile is not to be regarded as essentially unlike the religions of other primitive peoples. This position has been accepted by the large majority of professional scholars who have studied the subject; and it is here taken as an established fact. Dissenting readers can at least assume it with us for the time being.

It was not until after the Babylonian exile that ethical monotheism was officially established as the religion of Israel. Critical study of the literature which has

been collected into our Old Testament shows that the official religion of Israel was polytheistic before the exile. They had many gods, which were regarded as real persons. There were family gods, or Teraphim; district gods, or Baalim; and above all the smaller cults was the cult of Yahweh, "the god of Israel" — the deity whom all the tribes acknowledged in their national, or collective, character.⁴

⁴ The first syllable of the holy name "Yahweh" is given in Ps. 68:4, and many other places, as "JAH." It is pronounced "Yah," as in the word "hallelujah," which means "praise Yah." The form "Jehovah" was introduced by a sixteenth-century monk, and was unknown to the Israelites. All that we have in the Hebrew text is the consonants Y H W H (יהוה).

V

THE COVENANT WITH YAHWEH

Not only was Yahweh thought of before the exile as one god among many real gods; but careful investigation makes it clear that he was not originally worshiped by Israel, his cult being derived from another people. So far as Israel was concerned, Yahweh was not a nature-god, whose blood flowed in the veins of his worshipers. He was a *covenant* god, whose connection with his people was not physical. It is indeed upon an actual, historical covenant, or testament (the terms are synonymous), that the Bible revolves.

Primitive tribes often adopt outsiders. When this is done, the incomer not only covenants with the people of the tribe; he enters, at the same time, into covenant with their god. In the very nature of primitive religion, an outsider could not relate himself to a people without also coming into relation with their deity,

since people and god formed a single society. The covenant relation was not limited as to numbers, for a whole tribe might in this way become connected with a hitherto foreign god. Thus we see that primitive religious ideas provided for something more than a natural, or blood-relation, between the gods and their worshippers.

All the Old Testament sources unite on the proposition that Israel and Yahweh became specially connected as people and god at a particular time and place. "I am Yahweh thy god from the land of Egypt," says Hosea.¹ And we are told over and over again that Yahweh chose Israel at the time of the exodus, delivered them from the land of Egypt, and entered into definite relations with them at Horeb-Sinai and Kadesh.

At the period of the exodus we find that the Israelites came into close and lasting relations with a pastoral people known as the Kenites, who, in turn, belonged to a larger social group called the Midianites.

¹ Hos. 12:9.

The Israelite leader Moses married into the Kenites, and became son-in-law of Jethro, their priest and leader.² Later, we find that the Kenites, or some of them, accompanied the Israelites into the wilderness of Judah.³ Later still, we see the wife of Heber the Kenite enlisted in the cause of Israel.⁴ There were Kenites in the south of Judah during the days of Saul and David.⁵ At a still later period, when the foreign Baal party was wiped out by the Yahweh party, we find Jehonadab, the son of Rechab the Kenite, on the side of Israel and Yahweh.⁶ Still further along in the history, in the time of Jeremiah, we see the Kenite descendants of Jehonadab pouring into Jerusalem from the country for fear of the Chaldean army.⁷ Thus it is plain that the Israelites were associated with the Kenites for many centuries.

Looking further, we find that the Old

² Exod., chaps. 2 and 3. ⁴ Judg., chaps. 4, 5.

³ Judg. 1:16.

⁵ 1 Sam. 15:6; 30:30.

⁶ 2 Kings 10:15 f. For Jehonadab's Kenite descent through Rechab see 1 Chron. 2:55.

⁷ Jer., chap. 35.

Testament shows persistent traces of the association of Yahweh with the Sinai region, where the Kenites lived. In one place we read: "Yahweh came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them. He shined forth from Mount Paran."⁸ The terms "Paran" and "Seir" are connected with the Sinai region. Elsewhere we read: "Yahweh, thou wentest forth out of Seir."⁹ In another place: "The Holy One came from Mount Paran."¹⁰ Tradition sends the prophet Elijah, in a season of discouragement, to find Yahweh at the old mountain Horeb-Sinai.¹¹ Thus we see, not only that Israel and the Kenites were intimately associated, but that Yahweh, the covenant god of Israel, was persistently connected with the home country of the Kenites.

As to the significance of these facts, it is becoming clear to scholars that Israel derived the worship of Yahweh from the Kenites. Not that the religion of Yahweh, as we have it in its final Old

⁸ Deut.. 33 : 2.

¹⁰ Habak. 3 : 3.

⁹ Judg. 5 : 4.

¹¹ 1 Kings, chap. 19.

Testament form, came from such a source. Far from that. The later, developed religion of the Old Testament is the work of the prophets of Israel on the basis of history. But in the early religion of Israel, Yahweh was one among many real gods. He was a local deity, who became associated with Israel by covenant; and the only point from which he could have been derived seems to be the Kenites.

A very simple and natural account of the covenant is preserved in the eighteenth chapter of Exodus. Here we read that Jethro, the Kenite priest, Moses' father-in-law, brings a burnt-offering and sacrifices for the Divine Majesty (i. e., Yahweh). "And Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before *Elohim* (Divine Majesty)." This was a sacrificial meal. It represents nothing less than the covenant between Israel and the Kenites, which included the induction of Israel into the worship of Yahweh. The leading character in this transaction is Jethro, the Kenite priest. Jethro it is who, in his

priestly character, brings the burnt-offerings and the sacrifices. And it is with Jethro that Aaron and the elders of Israel come to eat bread. True to the facts of primitive religion, this ancient tradition puts the Kenite priest into the foreground; and, in speaking of Israel, it specifies Aaron and the elders to the exclusion of Moses. The omission of Moses from this ceremony is significant, for, having previously married into the tribe, he was already in covenant with the Kenites and their god.

This is the form under which, on the basis of the Old Testament itself, we are compelled to envisage the facts. "The results with which we have to content ourselves in the Mosaic period are meagre," says Professor H. P. Smith. "There may have been an Israelite clan that sojourned in Egypt. Its exodus was not improbably due to a religious leader. Under this religious leader the people entered into covenant with other desert-dwelling clans at Kadesh. The god who sanctioned the

alliance and who became a party to it was Yahweh, the Storm-god of Sinai.”¹²

¹² H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History* (New York, 1903), p. 72. The Kenite derivation of the primitive Yahweh cult is accepted by Tiele, Stade, Budde, Guthe, Wildeboer, Cheyne, H. P. Smith, W. R. Harper, G. A. Barton, G. F. Moore, and many others. It represents an encouraging approach to the sociological standpoint from the ground of theology. It is this particular covenant (ברית) involving the Kenites, that is in the minds of the great formative prophets. “The covenant of the prophets is the covenant of Sinai, in which Yahweh became god of the nation” (Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament* [New York, 1904], p. 246). The word translated “covenant,” *berith*, occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament. Its later significance varies considerably from its earlier meaning.

Our indebtedness to the excellent work by Professor Budde, of Strassburg, is acknowledged in another connection.

VI

THE INVASION OF CANAAN

After the covenant with the Kenites and their god Yahweh, the next important step in the early history of Israel was the invasion of Canaan.

For many centuries before this time the land of Canaan had been, not only settled, but civilized. In the preceding five hundred years the country had been ruled and fought over by three great oriental powers. The Babylonians held sway there so long that their language had been adopted as a medium of written communication among the upper classes. But in the fifteenth century before Christ, Babylonia was troubled at home by the rising military power of her northern offshoot, Assyria; while in Canaan itself she was replaced by the northeastward advance of Egypt. Governors from Egypt were placed in the Canaanite cities. Before a

century has passed, however, we find Egyptian governors writing home for help, saying that they are unable to hold the territory. These letters, coming from such cities as Jerusalem, Tyre, Gezer, and Ashkelon, have been recently discovered in Egypt. As the Egyptians were unable to retain the country, it was relinquished, in part to local Canaanite princes, and in part to the Hittites, whose seat was in Asia Minor in the north. It was at this interesting juncture that the barbarian Israelites broke from the desert into "the land flowing with milk and honey."

According to the first chapter of Judges, the invaders merely succeeded in obtaining a foothold in the rural districts, leaving the Canaanites in control of the walled cities and many of the dependent agricultural villages. The emphasis here is to be placed on the distribution of the social elements at the basis of the Bible history: the Israelites, rural; the Canaanites, urban. This fact must be held firmly in mind. Its importance comes clearly into view as we proceed. The claim here is

not that the Israelites were in complete control of the country districts; nor that the Canaanites were uniformly confined to the cities. We are merely trying to state the situation as a whole.

VII

YAHWEH AND THE BAALIM

The Canaanites, in their city strongholds, were at first full of hostility against the Israelites who had intruded into the land. But there was no reason for permanent feud between them; and history shows that the two elements were slowly adjusted, melting at length into a new social grouping. Ethnically, they were well prepared for this. Both belonged to the great Semitic race. Both spoke variations of the same tongue.

The social aggregate resulting from their union was essentially identical with all human aggregates. But the outward forms in which the life of Israel in Canaan finally reached expression were so unique that they have struck in upon the consciousness of all succeeding ages.

The book of Judges gives a brief and fragmentary account of conditions in Canaan from the period of the Israelite

invasion down to the period of the monarchy. At the beginning of the book, the two elements are at sword's points; at the end, union is in sight.

After the people of Yahweh had entered Canaan, attacks were made upon the land by still other outsiders. As the Israelites gradually settled down in the country districts, leaving the Canaanites mainly in the towns and their vicinity, these further attacks proved to be troublesome, not only to the Israelites, but to the Canaanites as well. Enemies from without the land had no occasion for making a permanent distinction between Canaan and Israel, for outsiders were enemies of all the people in the territory they coveted. Not only this; but since the Israelites were gradually identifying themselves with the rural economic life of Canaan, foreign attacks naturally disturbed the food-supply of the Canaanite cities. All this at length had the effect of creating a community of interest and feeling between the older and newer inhabitants of the land.

In the third chapter of Judges we read

that "the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, and took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods." The worship of the Canaanite gods by the Israelites was perfectly natural. We need to hold steadily in mind the fact that all ancient religions contemplated the gods, equally with men, as part of the social aggregate. The divine and the human members of the social circle were thought to be essentially the same, differing only as the heroic man differs from the mean man. According to these ideas, refusal to recognize the gods of people with whom one associates is like entering a home and ignoring the head of the family. It is not merely rude; it draws down the displeasure and ill-will of the ignored one.

There was nothing else, then, for the Israelites to do. As they gradually settled down, they came into more and more intimate association with the earlier inhabitants of the land. As we are told in the passage just quoted, the Israelites and

Canaanites intermarried. In the face of this growing fellowship, what could the Israelites do but associate also with the Canaanite gods? They did not thereby cease to acknowledge the godship of Yahweh. They were still the people of Yahweh; and he was still the *general* god of all the tribes of Israel.

Worship of the local gods was necessary not only in the general view of primitive religion; it was demanded by the special situation. The nomadic, pastoral Israelites, fresh from the desert, were eager to learn the arts of agriculture and settled life, and to do anything contributory to success in those pursuits. The gods of Canaan were thought to preside over the peaceful arts, bless the soil, and supply the dew and rain without which the crops could not grow. Therefore, on these grounds also, Israel must court their favor. Yahweh was not at first regarded as a god of Canaan, since his people had obtained a foothold only in the country districts. Nor was he an agricultural god. He was a divinity of

the desert, the mountain, and the storm. He was a god that "dwelt in the bush."¹ Over and over again the Old Testament declares that he was a god of hosts, or armies, mighty in battle; and the careful student can see that this was his earliest character. He was powerful in his own sphere; but that sphere was distinct from the world presided over by the Baalim, the local gods of Canaan.

¹Deut. 33:16. Cf. Driver, *Deuteronomy* ("International Critical Commentary," New York, 1895), p 406.

VIII

UNION AND MONARCHY

Israelites and Canaanites were at length welded into a single political mass by pressure of the Philistines and Ammonites. Consideration of this fact raises points of basic importance.

In the first place, the Israelites and Canaanites, in combining against their enemies, were not rallied to war in the name of any of the local Baalim, whose worship centered in the cities. None of these gods were gods of war; they were the deities of an essentially peaceful people. Besides this, none of them had a general jurisdiction in the land. None of them had been acknowledged at the same time by all the Canaanite cities. But, in contrast with the Baalim, a certain god was generally recognized and worshiped by people scattered all through the rural parts of Canaan. He was not merely a district god, like the Canaanite divinities;

nor was he a god of peace, whose worshipers had been settled in their possessions time out of mind. He was god of all the tribes; and the Israelites loved to think of him as a god of hosts, or armies, mighty in battle. "Yahweh is a man of war," they said proudly.¹ Later generations even had a book entitled "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh."² To what other god in the land could the allied Israelites and Canaanites look with as much hope of success against their enemies? The local Baalim had not been able to keep Yahweh and Israel out of Canaan. It was Yahweh, therefore, who led the allies against their common enemies; and it was by his power that the invading hosts were rolled back. At length city and country alike were united into a single political territory under a king. All its people became Yahweh's people, for he had given them all success against their enemies; and since he was "god of Israel," the Canaanites became Israelites in name. "The land of Ca-

¹ Exod. 15 : 3.

² Numb. 21 : 14 f.

naan" became "the land of Israel." Thus, the Israelites never became Canaanites. On the contrary, the latter took the name of Israel.³ "The old population," writes Wellhausen, "slowly became amalgamated with the new. In this way the Israelites received a very important accession to their numbers. In Deborah's time the fighting men of Israel numbered forty thousand; the tribe of Dan, when it migrated to Laish, counted six hundred warriors; Gideon pursued the Midianites with three hundred. But in the reigns of Saul and David we find a population reckoned by millions. The rapid increase is to be accounted for by the incorporation of the Canaanites."⁴

³ Cornill, *History of the People of Israel* (Chicago, 1899), p. 48; Wellhausen, *History of Israel, etc.* (London, 1891), p. 8; Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy* (Edinburgh, 1903), pp. 39, 63.

⁴ Wellhausen, *op. cit.*, p. 35. This has now become a commonplace of biblical scholarship. "The history of the times of the Judges and of the early kingdom," says Professor G. F. Moore, "proves that many generations elapsed after the invasion before Israel was in full possession of the land; and that, far from being extirpated at one stroke, the Canaanites remained for centuries by the side of the Israelites, and disappeared at last by gradual absorp-

The resulting mixed race of Canaanitish Israelites naturally emphasized its descent from the conquering Israelite stock, and rapidly forgot its Canaanite ancestry. In coming centuries the invasion of the land by the tribes of Israel projected itself into bold relief against the historical background; while the subsequent intermingling of the races made no impression on the popular mind. Everybody wanted, of course, to be known as descended from the conquerors. As a result, later generations cherished the tradition that *their* ancestors came into the country, and swept away the alien Canaanites. This is, indeed, one of the stock ideas of the un-critical Bible reader; and unless we take the trouble to look below the surface, and hold the real facts of the situation steadily in mind, we shall miss the historical truth.

We have already seen that, after the Israelites had settled among the Canaan-

tion in the dominant population. In all this, the subsequent history confirms the general truthfulness or the representation in Judg. I." — Moore, *Polychrome Judges* (New York, 1898), p. 47.

ites, the two races intermarried. Alliances were contracted between the families of the Israelite chiefs and elders, who had seized the undefended agricultural districts, and the families of wealthy Canaanites, who resided principally in the towns. One of these mixed marriages was that contracted between Gideon, an Israelite rustic chief, and a woman of the Canaanite city of Shechem.⁵ An issue of this union was the ill-fated Abimelech. It was Gideon's family, by the way, that headed the first attempt to unite country and city in a kingdom.⁶ The movement failed at this time because it was too early.

At the outset the balance of power in the new nation was in the country aristocracy. Accordingly, it is the country, with its agricultural interests, that controls the earlier history of the kingdom. We hear but little of the cities at first, *not* because they were not yet in existence, *but* because the new nation was originally dominated by the rural party. Gideon, as already observed, was a clan chief in the

⁵ Judg. 8:31, and chap. 9.

⁶ Judg., chap. 9.

agricultural districts.⁷ Saul, the first king, was the son of Kish, a wealthy farmer.⁸ David, the next king, also came of a rural family, and began life as a shepherd.⁹ In the earlier part of his career he married the widow of Nabal, a rich country landlord.¹⁰

But intermarriages between the rural Israelites and the city Canaanites produced families which inherited both city and country property. This tended to carry the balance of power into the cities, where wealth had centered long before the Israelite invasion. The shifting of the balance of power toward the cities probably became noticeable even in the reign of David. At a later period in his career he forsook the country; took forcible possession of Jerusalem, which had remained Canaanite up to this time; and identified himself so closely with the place that it became known as "the city of David."¹¹ The third king, Solomon,

⁷ Judg. 6: 11.

⁸ 1 Sam. 9: 1; 11: 5. ¹⁰ 1 Sam. 25: 2, 42.

⁹ 1 Sam. 16: 11.

¹¹ 2 Sam. 5: 6, 7, 9.

made his headquarters in the city. Under him we may suppose that the process of social amalgamation, begun in the judges period, was practically completed.¹²

¹² In the editorial revision of 1 Kings, chap. 9, Solomon is supposed to reduce to slavery the remnant of the earlier inhabitants of the land. But the fusion of Canaanites and Israelites was accomplished before this time; and the only ground upon which even a limited historical application can be conceded to this passage is the possibility that small groups of Canaanites had succeeded in maintaining isolation.

IX

THE INCREASE OF YAHWEH

We have seen that Yahweh was regarded at the outset as a god of local jurisdiction. But the rise and progress of Canaanitish Israel brought with it the rise of Yahweh among the gods.

At his lowest estate, so far as we can judge, Yahweh was the tribal deity of the Kenites. But through the covenant between these desert wanderers and the Israelites the latter acknowledged him as their god. The situation is exactly struck off by Jeremiah when he says: "Israel was consecrated [ness] unto Yahweh—the first fruits of his increase."¹ The setting apart, or consecrating, of Israel unto Yahweh is rightly thought of by the prophet quoted as marking the early steps of Yahweh's increase. He had chosen Israel, delivered them from Egypt, de-

¹ Jer. 2:3; cf. 2 Sam. 7:23, where Yahweh is said to choose Israel in order "to make him a name." Cf. Neh. 9:10.

feated the gods of Egypt, and given his new people a home in the land of Canaan. This tradition, of course, did not mean so much in the judges period, before the founding of the monarchy, as it did afterward; for in the early period the term "Israel" meant only the country folk. But after the union of city and country, and the disappearance of the Canaanites under the name of Israel, the tradition acquired more weight; for the term "Israel" now represented far more than at first. To the later generations issuing from the union of Israelites and Canaanites the tradition that Yahweh had given Israel a home in Canaan meant not merely that he had given them the rural districts, but that he had conquered for them the entire land of Canaan. This is a proposition which the biblical writers never succeed in adjusting with the facts, one affirming that all the Canaanites were exterminated;² another, that Israel was able to

² Josh. 11:16 f. This account cannot be forced into agreement with the history.

take only the country districts.³ However this may be, the increase of Israel brought with it the increase of Yahweh. He advanced from the position of a desert, tribal god to that of a national god.

But this was not all. Israel hardly became a nation before it rose to an imperial position. The Amalekites had been severely chastised. The Philistines, on the southwest, had been so completely defeated that they never again harassed the land. The Moabites. Ammonites, Edomites, and Arameans, on the east and northeast, were defeated and put to tribute by Israel. According to primitive theology, the gods of all these peoples therefore fell below the level of the great deity of Israel, who was plainly showing himself to be "a god of hosts, mighty in battle."

The people of Israel began to be proud. Comparatively ignorant of geography and history, they believed their country was becoming the greatest in the world, and

³ Judg. 1:27 f. This is the narrative on which all modern students of the Old Testament history depend.

their god the greatest of all gods.⁴ He had shown himself superior to the divinities of Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Aramea, and Amalek. Of the other peoples in the eastern world at this critical period there were none that could have any positive influence on the religious consciousness of Israel. The Phœnicians, on the northwest, were a commercial race; and their gods made no impression. The Babylonians, having long ago deserted Canaan, were too far away in their distant homeland to exercise any influence upon the imagination of Yahweh's people. And the equally remote Assyrian kingdom had not at this

⁴ The idea that Israel was the greatest nation survived into the eighth century and beyond—a period far later than that which we are here studying. Cf. Amos 6:1, where Israel is called “the chief of the nations;” and Jer. 31:7, where the same term, “head,” or “chief,” of the nations, is applied. The idea reappears in the post-exilic Isa. 61:5 f., and becomes a stock element of the Jewish messianic hope. The expansion of the Yahweh conception had thus an ample basis in social psychology. Cf. Kuenen, *The Religion of Israel* (London, 1882), Vol. I, p. 342; Harper, *Amos and Hosea* (New York, 1905), p. 143; G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets* (New York), Vol. I, p. 173; Duff, *Theology and Ethics of the Hebrews* (New York, 1902), p. 32.

time grown powerful enough to throw its armies upon the Mediterranean seaboard.

Thus, in the thought of Israel, Yahweh had risen superior to all gods with whom he had come in contact; and it was a natural inference, flattering to the pride of Israel, that he was more powerful than all the gods of earth and heaven. The Assyrians thought likewise of their god. "Assur was supreme over all other gods," writes Professor Sayce, "as his representative, the Assyrian king, was supreme over the other kings of the earth."⁵ In this spirit of national aggrandizement, the proud Israelite would say "Oh, magnify Yahweh with me; and let us exalt his name together."⁶ Another would ask: "Who is like unto thee, Yahweh, among the gods?"⁷ Another would declare: "Yahweh is god of gods!"⁸ While still another would affirm: "He judgeth among the gods."⁹

⁵ Sayce, *Babylonians and Assyrians* (New York, 1900), p. 256.

⁶ Ps. 34: 3.

⁸ Deut. 10: 17.

⁷ Exod. 15: 11.

⁹ Ps. 82: 1.

X

THE DECLINE OF ISRAEL

Israel was a united kingdom less than a hundred years. Upon the death of Solomon, about 931 B. C., a dispute arose concerning the subject of taxation. As a result, the kingdom was rent in twain. The northern part—lying directly in the oriental trade-routes, and containing most of the wealthy cities—broke away from the southern section, which was more largely agricultural and had but few cities. During the following century (931–831 B. C.) there went forward a concentration of property which, under one form or another, has been reproduced in every civilization of history. The great, outstanding fact is that the country folk fell more and more into the economic grasp of the cities.

During the period of the united kingdom the land outside the cities was held by small farmers, whose Israelite ances-

tors had wrested it from the Canaanites a few generations before. These farmers, together with their sons, and sometimes a few slaves, worked the soil with their own hands.¹

In time of war the wealthy city classes could pay for substitutes, and meanwhile attend to their own business. But the small farmer, unable to produce ready money, and spurred on by fear of devastation, was compelled to exchange the implements of peace for the weapons of war. A comparatively short campaign would work large damage to agricultural proprietors of this type. Even were there no wars, other conditions made equal havoc. A drouth, such as not infrequently afflicts eastern countries; a pest of insects; a crop failure from these or other causes—such things were dreadful realities.

The rural proprietor, overtaken by one or all of these evils, and finding his farm depleted, would frequently borrow from

¹ Examples: Gideon, Judg., chap. 6; Kish, the father of Saul, 1 Sam., chap. 9; Jesse, the father of David, 1 Sam., chap. 17; Shaphat, the father of Elisha, 1 Kings, chap. 19.

some wealthier person in the hope of lifting himself out of his troubles. There were always richer men—mostly in the cities—who were glad to advance money or goods to needy farmers, provided their loans were secured by mortgages upon farm property.

Slowly but surely, as the years passed, a condition arose which is illustrated by developments after the return from the Babylonian exile. As described in Nehemiah, the people of that later time say: "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses. Let us get grain, because of the dearth. We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our fields and our vineyards."² So, in the earlier period that we are now considering, the farm lands of Canaanitish Israel were gradually mortgaged to the wealthier classes, which centered in the cities.

Loans were gladly made, and gladly taken; but they were not so easily nor so gladly repaid. A new war, a bad season,

² Neh. 5: 3, 4.

the unequal pressure of taxation as between city and country, left the farming class as badly situated as before. When it became evident that there could be no general redemption of mortgages, the wealthy classes began to foreclose wherever possible. The farmers were forced into a position like that of their descendants, already cited, who said: "We bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants; neither is it in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards."³ Thus the rift between rich and poor, between city and country, widened slowly into a great chasm.

To the backward economic sense and

³ Neh., *loc. cit*; cf. 2 Kings., chap. 4, for specific case: "The creditor is come to take unto him my two children to be bondmen." "The people were crushed by oppressive taxation, as well as by private extortions. They were doubtless often forced to borrow money to pay the taxes, and when unable to pay the interest, lost their lands by foreclosure" (Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Prophets* [London, 1901], p. 216). "The unhappy Syrian wars sapped the strength of the country, and gradually destroyed the old peasant proprietors" (W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel* [London, 1897], p. 88). Cf. Paton, *Early History of Syria and Palestine* (New York, 1901), p. 227.

primitive ideas of the Israelite rustics, foreclosure of mortgages was a crowning iniquity. Debtor and creditor alike worshiped the same national god, and were sons of that god, and therefore brothers to each other.⁴ Thus men were deprived of their ancestral homes by their own brothers.

On the other hand, the city plutocrats took a different view. They lived in a more commercial, modern atmosphere. They and their ancestors had made loans to the rustic and his ancestors; and these loans were a just claim against the farmers' property. While the city creditor admitted the brotherhood of his rural contemporary, he denied the terms in which the rustic debtor construed that brotherhood.

After all, the outcome was the same whether mortgages were foreclosed or not. If they were not foreclosed, the farmer had to pay unceasing interest on

⁴ Although Yahweh was connected with Israel only by covenant, he was thought of as taking the place of a father, and was referred to in the paternal character, like any foster-father.

his loan, over and above his taxes and living expenses. On the other hand, if a mortgage were foreclosed, the farmer who thus lost his home was thereby relieved of interest and taxes; but he must now, in competition with poor men like himself, either hire a farm at a rack-rent from some wealthy landlord, or take his place among poorly paid farm laborers. In any event, the rural population as a whole would be brought more and more under the economic sway of the wealthy classes, which centered in the cities of Canaanitish Israel.

If it were unbrotherly and wicked for a city creditor to foreclose on a rustic debtor, then, by the same reasoning, it was wrong for him to demand interest on loans, or to charge rent for country property that fell into his hands, or to do any one of a dozen things that are accounted right and honorable in a commercial society. The case between country and city was not a case between persons, but between different social standpoints. The country had one standpoint, which it

identified with justice and righteousness. The city had another point of view, which it held to be equally right.⁵

⁵ The Old Testament laws against holding the lands of another family over a certain period; against interest (translated "usury" in A. V., but "interest" in R. V.); and against Israelites holding persons of their own nation in perpetual servitude—all this legislation was practically a dead letter. It is, indeed, *ex post facto*, recording the desire of the rural party, and standing as negative evidence of conditions that actually prevailed. That is to say, lands were *not* returned by creditors; interest *was* charged; and slaves *were* held.

XI

THE REVOLUTION

As this condition developed, there grew up along with it an ever brighter tradition of a golden age under David and Solomon. The glory and happiness of that earlier time were made to stand out in bold contrast with the shame and misery of the evil days upon which men were now falling. Clear marks of this tradition are found in the work of a writer who lived in the midst of the later age of trouble. "Judah and Israel," he says, "were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba."¹ This passage is valuable as an item in the mass of evidence pointing to concentration of landed property in Israel. When it tells us that *every* man

¹ 1 Kings 4: 20, 25.

dwelt under his own vine and fig tree, it tells us, in a roundabout way, that in the earlier time every man lived on his own land, in contrast with the later age in which fewer men occupied their own farms. In testimony to the same fact, the prophet Micah, instead of looking backward, anticipates a better era when "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree."² Both writers give indirect proof of the same condition. Micah, indeed, states the case directly. "Woe to them that devise iniquity!" he exclaims. "They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them away; and they oppress a man and his family, even a man and his heritage."³

A dramatic and futile social movement now comes gradually into view.

In ancient theology the troubles of a people were always ascribed to the ill-will of the gods. On the famous "Moabite

² Mic. 4:4.

³ Mic. 2:1, 2; cf. Isa. 5:8. These passages are, of course, later than the period here under view; but they may be usefully considered at this point in connection with the other evidence.

Stone" King Mesha says: "Omri, king of Israel, afflicted Moab for many days." The reason for this affliction was "because Chemosh (the god of Moab) was angry with his land."⁴ The malice of the gods was thought to be due either to some mistake in the ritual, or to some unwitting error in the conduct of their worshipers. Extraordinary sacrifices were offered up in the hope of winning back their favor. Thus, during a battle between Israel and Moab which seemed to be going against the latter, "the king of Moab took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall." The biblical writer here quoted evidently has the same theological ideas as the Moabites, for he goes on to say that "there came great wrath upon Israel; and they returned to their own land."⁵

In trying to cure their troubles, the people of Israel divided into two parties on the standing ground of these primitive

⁴ *Encyclopedia Biblica* (New York, 1902), double column 3045, 3046.

⁵ 2 Kings 3: 27.

theological ideas. The parties, although at first separated only by slight differences, at length diverged sharply in their essential positions.

The first party centered among the city plutocrats, into whose hands the property of Israel was gradually falling. They admitted that Israel's condition was in some respects worse than it had been under David and Solomon. The kingdom was divided; there had been drouth and suffering; and their armies had met with defeat. These troubles were evidently due to the fact that Yahweh was angry with his people for some cause that they could not fathom. Perhaps they had not been assiduous enough in the sacrifice. There may have been some mistake in the ancient ritual. Possibly their troubles could be remedied by bringing more and better sacrifices to the altars of Yahweh. The attitude of this party is indicated in a few words by Micah, the Morashtite, in his book, written in the eighth century before Christ. He brings before us an adherent of the plutocratic, city party, who

asks: "With what shall I come before Yahweh? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I sacrifice my first-born child for my mistakes?"⁶ Micah's man here stands as a type of his class, which has nothing to suggest but a purely ritualistic program, culminating in precisely that measure to which the Moabite king resorted as a remedy for the troubles of his people—human sacrifice.

While the party just described centered in the cities, the other centered in the rural districts. The earliest platform of the rural party was as follows: Israel's troubles are not the result of obscure mistakes in worship; they are the issue of a perfectly plain, unmistakable cause. Yahweh *chose* Israel out of all the peoples of the earth, and raised his elect from nothing to royal estate. Israel ought to serve him in preference to other gods in

⁶ Mic. 6: 6, 7.

the same whole-hearted way that he has served them in preference to other peoples. But Israel has given only half-hearted allegiance to Yahweh, and has mixed his worship with the service of the Baalim, the gods of the Canaanites, the former inhabitants of the land! Not only this; but Israel has raised altars and built temples to the gods of foreign nations in the very land that Yahweh so graciously conquered for his chosen people! Israel has been tried in the balances by a good god, and found wanting. Yahweh has shown, by what he has actually done for Israel, that he is both willing and able to be faithful to his side of the covenant relation; and the troubles of the nation are the just punishment, whereby Yahweh is chastising them for serving other gods. If Israel would once more have good things and be happy, let them put away all other gods from before the face of Yahweh, for he is a jealous god; and let them return and serve him only; and he will abundantly pardon. The program of

the rural districts, therefore, was: Down with all gods but Yahweh!⁷

The country party made use of the covenant idea; but the city party ignored the covenant, and treated the god of Israel as if he were a nature-god, who had grown up with his people on the basis of blood-relationship. To the latter the program of their opponents was foolishness.

The views of the rustic party were crystallized out of the indefinite social ferment of the time by the policy of King Ahab, of the northern Israelite kingdom. Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Phœnician city of Tyre; and brought his foreign wife to his capital,

⁷ These propositions of the country party form the backbone of the "Book of the Covenant," produced some time before the period of Josiah (2 Kings, chaps. 22, 23). This work was later expanded into our present book of Deuteronomy, which is pre-eminently the Book of the Covenant. The idea of material good and evil, as resulting from service of Yahweh and other gods respectively, is dwelt upon at length in the later production. The good is there symbolized by Mount Gerizim; the evil, by Mount Ebal (Deut. 11: 26-29). A more primitive "Covenant Book" along these lines is found in Exod., chaps. 21-23, 34.

the city of Samaria. In honor of his wife's people, he erected a temple in Samaria to the Baal of Tyre. In building this temple, Ahab intended no disloyalty to Yahweh. He was only doing what the older theological ideas held to be the right thing. Besides, he had a precedent in the case of a great Yahweh-man, Solomon, who had married many foreign wives, and erected several temples in honor of their gods. That Ahab recognized Yahweh as god of Israel is proved by the fact that children born to him were given names compounded with that of Yahweh,⁸ and also by the fact that he consulted many of the prophets, or spokesmen, of the national god.⁹

There now appeared the first great champion of the rural party. He came, not from the cities, but from the country. The biblical narrative introduces him abruptly as among the inhabitants, or sojourners, of Gilead—an agricultural district in the northeast of Israel.¹⁰ Probably

⁸ 1 Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 3:1.

⁹ 1 Kings 22:6 f. ¹⁰ 1 Kings 17:1.

the world does not know the real name of this man; but history knows him by a theophoric name which describes his work, and by which he will always be remembered. He preached that the god (*El*) whom Israel ought to worship was Yahweh. Hence the name El-Yah, Eliyah, or Elijah, by which this man is known.

The most dramatic event in Elijah's career centered about the very problem which lay at the basis of the reaction of country against city. Through false witness and murder, King Ahab came into possession of land belonging to a certain Israelite whose name was Naboth. The incident gave Elijah an opportunity which he was quick to improve. Boldly making his way into the royal presence, he confronted the king with an awful curse.

It is very important to point out that the significance of this case lies, not in the wicked manner by which Naboth was dispossessed, but in the simple fact that he was dispossessed. The Israelite farmers were economically so backward that they

made no distinction between treacherously seizing an estate, as Ahab did, and foreclosing a mortgage on landed property. The one was just as bad as the other: the two were morally the same—so the rustic party held.¹¹ Not only was foreclosure wicked, but it was wicked to charge interest on the loans that were secured by mortgage. The Ahab-Naboth case, involving the passage of land from one of the smaller to one of the wealthier Israelites, throws out into bold relief, as by a lightning flash, the silent process of economic concentration which we have been emphasizing. It is for this reason, and not because Ahab connived in the murder, that the incident is given such prominence in the Bible. To the confused, ignorant, and excited farmer folk this case typified the entire contemporary process of land concentration.

Some time before his death, Elijah formally designated as his associate and successor Elisha, the son of Shaphat.

¹¹ Cf. Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Prophets* (London, 1901), pp. 225 f.

Elisha, also, came from the rural districts. When called by Elijah, he was plowing behind twelve yoke of oxen.¹² His family was located at Abelmeholah, an agricultural village in Gilead.¹³

The movement of the country party did not come to a practical issue until after the death of Elijah. In the time of his successor, Elisha, there occurred a startling revolution. The organization of the rustic party seems to have centered at this time in Gilead. It was thence that Elijah and Elisha came; and the last-named prophet himself now sent to Ramoth of Gilead for an Israelite of honorable ancestry, Jehu by name, to "rise up from among his brethren," and become the leader of the rural party in the field of politics.¹⁴ The object of the farmers was big and bold. They aimed to capture the government of Israel, which, for over a century, had been controlled by the cities. And since there was no constitutional channel through which party politics

¹² 1 Kings 19:19.

¹³ 1 Kings, 19:16.

¹⁴ 2 Kings, chap. 9.

could find expression, the leaders of the farmers resolved on the murder of the city leaders. Jehu killed the reigning kings of Israel and Judah, wiped out the entire family of Ahab in the city of Samaria, brought his murders to a climax by a wholesale slaughter of worshipers in the temple of Tyrian Baal, and then mounted the throne as an ardent Yahweh-man.

This was the balm that flowed out upon Israel from the land of Gilead—that primitive, rustic land, where the goats lay along the mountain side,¹⁵ where people and flock fed in the ancient days,¹⁶ and where Yahweh would yet again bring Israel to the sheep-fold and the hills.¹⁷ It was this land, where the Israelites longest retained their early simplicity, that supplied the first agitators and leaders in the movement of country against city.

At this interesting point in the history, the Kenites, from whom Israel derived its Yahweh-worship, come into momentary

¹⁵ Song of Solomon, 4: 1.

¹⁶ Mic. 7: 14.

¹⁷ Jer. 50: 19.

view. There is a striking passage in Kings, whose meaning, like that of so many Bible facts, is lost to those who read our sacred literature from the conventional standpoint. The passage referred to seems to interrupt the connection of the narrative. It is merely a notice to the effect that Jehu, in the midst of his bloody work, called upon a certain Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, to witness his "zeal" for Yahweh; and we are further told that this son of Rechab was present when Jehu slaughtered the devotees in the temple of Baal, and destroyed the worship of Baal from Israel.¹⁸

The context supplies no hint about the identity of Jehonadab, nor why he should be given this peculiar prominence in the narrative. But in two other Old Testament passages we find material that solves the problem and puts the incident in its true relation to history. From a genealogical list in Chronicles we learn that Rechab, the father of Jehonadab, was a Kenite.¹⁹ In the thirty-fifth chapter of

¹⁸ 2 Kings, 10 : 15-28. ¹⁹ 1 Chron. 2 : 55.

Jeremiah we see the Rechabite descendants of Jehonadab seeking temporary safety in Jerusalem in time of war. Their life, they say, is that of tent-dwellers and shepherds. The whole situation is now clear: The son of Rechab has a name compounded with that of the god of Israel, "Yah-nadab." His enthusiasm for Yahweh comes from two sources—his affinity with the rural districts, and his Kenite blood. He was a rustic house-father in Israel, and a strong man in the anti-Baal, pro-Yahweh party. When Jehu, the political head of the farmers' movement, called upon this man to witness his "zeal" for Yahweh, he knew that Jehonadab represented an important area of discontent and revolution. The handclasp of the two men, as Jehonadab mounted into the chariot of Jehu, signified, according to Israelite custom, that they were partners in the extermination of Baalism.

Thus we behold the political triumph of the rural party over the city party. Yahweh was now expected to smile upon

his people, and bring in again the golden age when every man should dwell safely under his vine and fig tree. And there can be no doubt that the country folk wanted King Jehu to proclaim laws against foreclosure of land mortgages at the will of the creditor, and against collection of interest on debts that were secured by such mortgages.

XII

THE REVOLUTION (*continued*)¹

The fundamental fact calling for emphasis here is the concentration of landed property, which took place in Israel as it has in all nations. If it can be shown, either that there was no concentration, or that, in the event of its occurrence, the rural classes did not lose to the urban property-holders, our claim falls to the ground. That the general fact of concentration is present in the history no one can deny. And as the entire situation becomes clear, it will be seen to be a hopeless undertaking to show that this economic movement did not take the general direction here indicated.

From this point we move to the next proposition: When the ownership of land began to center in the cities, the resulting

¹This chapter was written after the book had been provisionally completed; and it is inserted here in reply to criticism, as a restatement of the thesis up to this point.

reaction of country against city found expression in the protest of Yahwism, the cult whose tradition was strongest in the rural parts, against Baalism, whose cults were at that time strongest in the cities. Let it be observed incidentally that we do not posit the rural-urban reaction as exhausting the Yahweh movement, but only as initiating it. At a later stage, to be treated in the following chapter, the movement was emancipated from this, its original, form; and the cult-rivalry, Yahweh versus Baal, came to symbolize, not merely rustic right against city wrong, but good in general against bad in general. Had the movement failed to advance beyond the stage represented by Elijah and Elisha, it would not have been a fact of universal significance.

In order to demonstrate the initial dependence of Yahwism upon the rural-urban reaction, we conceive it to be necessary to establish the following positions: (1) After the settlement of Israel in Canaan, the Baal cults, although acknowledged in the rural districts among

Canaanites and Israelites, came to a center in the Canaanite cities that survived the invasion. (2) At the same time. Yahwism was, for a long period, almost exclusively a rural cult. It flourished more in the country than in the cities. That there was a Yahweh-Baal conflict everybody knows. That it was originally involved in the rural-urban reaction is here claimed. In order to break this claim, it will be necessary to show that the positions just indicated cannot be established. Our business now is to sketch the situation pointing to them as facts.

We cannot too strongly impress upon ourselves that long before the Israelite invasion city life was well developed in Canaan. Agriculture, of course, occupied a large part—perhaps the larger part—of society; but superimposed upon the simpler industry of the open country were the manufacturing and commercial pursuits of the cities. In the famous Tell-el-Amarna letters we have documents written *from* Canaanite cities *to* Egypt *in* the Babylonian tongue. These letters reflect

the general situation. Cānaān lay at the focal point of the ancient oriental world. Here met the civilizations of surrounding countries, connected by the trade-routes that ran through the land as great international highways. The important Cānaānite cities lay on these trade-routes, and were largely developed upon the commerce whose tides flowed through them. That is to say, they represented more than the local trading life, and occupied a cosmopolitan position.

Now, previous to the Israelite invasion, this important area of the ancient world was not united under a single native government. It was ruled by local "kings" ; and its religions were local cults. Cānaān was divided into many districts, each one having its own god, or divine proprietor, known as "the Baal." The Baals—or Baalim, as they are called in the Hebrew plural—were supposed to preside over all aspects and activities of life. Although the Baalim were worshiped in city and country, their cults naturally centered in the cities, because here the life of the

people came to a center. Here were the great markets, frequented alike by traders from other lands and by native buyers and sellers. Here were the seats of the local rulers. Here, therefore, were the most famous Baal shrines. "The proper site for an ancient shrine," observes Dr. G. A. Smith, "was nearly always a market."² And cities grew around markets. In maintaining that Canaanite Baalism centered in the cities, we are not claiming that Canaan was exceptional. It was in the cities of all the ancient nations, and not in the country districts, that their cults came to a focus; and the religious life of Canaan conformed in this respect to the practice of all history, including Christianity, whose great temples have always been in the cities.

Bearing these points in mind, we turn again to the Israelite invasion. The account in the first chapter of Judges recognizes that the Canaanite cities about which we have been speaking were al-

² G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets* (New York), Vol. I, p. 36; cf. H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History* (New York, 1903), pp. 172, 173.

ready in existence, and that they were of sufficient size and importance to have strong walls. The first chapter of Judges gives a list of twenty widely distributed cities which the Israelites were unable to reduce. And that this list, extensive as it is, does not exhaust the situation is shown by the fact that the cities of Gibeon and Shechem, not here mentioned, were inhabited by thriving Canaanite populations many years later. These widely spread centers of Baal-worship, then, lay in the midst of the Israelites, who held only parts of the open country.

The inroads of Israel upon the agricultural districts had thus two marked effects at the very outset of their occupation of Canaan: Baalism, already centering in the cities, was identified therewith rather more, if anything, than less; while Yahwism, representing the Israelite invaders, was for a long time (down to the middle of the ninth century B. C.) predominantly identified with a rural population. In other words, the social situation itself, on the basis of the hostility

engendered by the invasion, set up at the start an antithesis between the older Baal cults and the newer cult of Yahweh.

To study the Old Testament with care is to see that the narrative is at first controlled by the rural interest. It is rustic life, either in its pastoral or its agricultural form, that marks the main stream of the history all through the judges period, and well onward into the time of the kingdom. The reason for this is not that there are no great cities. It is that city life is as yet mainly controlled by the alien Canaanites, who are but slowly adjusted to the newcomers, and who, therefore, get scanty recognition in the narrative.

Let us look at these facts more closely. All the great outstanding characters of the judges period are people of the open country. Whenever the narrative drops into detail, it is rustic life that we see before us. Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Barak, Heber the Kenite, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Micah the Ephraimite, the two Levites of Ephraim—these are

all rustic folk; and it is about these people that the history of the time revolves. In connection with them we hear about live stock, and agriculture, and vineyards, and threshing-floors, and wine-presses. Over and over again we hear of "the hill country of Ephraim." The region thus indicated was an agricultural district in which lay the homes of many of the famous characters. There were, as already noted, a few Israelite cities in these earlier times, like Bethel and Shiloh, Succoth and Penuel; but the existence of these cities, which lay in the agricultural districts of Ephraim and Gilead, is not contrary to the present thesis. They were peopled by Israelites, and probably removed, for the time being, from extensive Canaanite influence.

In the book of Samuel, which continues the narrative begun in Judges, we come again into the hill country of Ephraim, the homeland of the famous prophet-judge. The father of Samuel makes a yearly visit to Shiloh, going up, as we are told, "from his city." Like many places

to which the term rendered "city" is applied, Ramah, the home of Samuel's family, was evidently an agricultural village.³ The offerings which Elkanah and Hannah bring up to the house of Yahweh at Shiloh are flour, wine, and a bullock. Saul, the next notable character in the narrative, was born of an agricultural family in Benjamin, to the south of Ephraim. He is introduced as he goes in search of the lost asses of Kish, his father. At the time of the Ammonite attack on the Israelites in Gilead, Saul comes following the oxen from the field. He hears the news, cuts a yoke of the animals in pieces, and sends the bloody fragments broadcast "throughout all the borders of Israel." The extent of Saul's legal authority is a matter of no interest here beside the fact that he is a rustic dealing with a rustic population; for he declares that "whosoever comes not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done

³ The term rendered "city" does not always denote a large, walled center. It is often applied to rustic villages, as in 1 Sam. 6:18, which speaks of "the cities of the Philistines, both of fortified cities and of country villages."

to *his oxen*." And as with Saul, so with David, the next important character in the narrative. David's family seat was in or near the "city" of Bethlehem in Judah. This place, like Ramah, was evidently another country village. David is introduced as a boy, tending the sheep of his father Jesse. Jesse's gifts to King Saul are those of a rustic: an ass laden with bread, a skin of wine, and a kid. David marries not only the daughter of the agriculturist Saul, but, at a later time, the widow of Nabal, a very wealthy sheep-master and goatherd.

But now a change comes over the history. David is elected king of Judah, and occupies the city of Hebron as his capital. Later chosen king of all Israel, he undertakes to remove his headquarters to another city. The place in question had been attacked by Israel at the time of their invasion of the land over two hundred years before; and it had remained Canaanite down to this period. Its name was Yerushalim (Jerusalem); and it is several times called Jebus, from the Canaanitish

Jebusites who dwelt in and around it. The fort of Jerusalem was captured and occupied by the king, who called it "the city of David." We have no reason to suppose that the capture of the fort was attended by extermination of the Canaanites of Jerusalem. On the contrary, we have every ground for assuming that the loss of life was merely that contingent upon the siege and capture of the place. At a later time we find David purchasing from Araunah the Jebusite the land whereon was raised the famous temple of Solomon. The family of Araunah the Jebusite, then, had remained in possession of their property. Probably the situation here suggested, of Israelites and Canaanites living peacefully together, is reflected by the passage which states that "as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem."⁴

With David the rustic tradition passes

⁴ Josh. 15 : 63.

away. Solomon, the next king, was a city man, as were all the following rulers. Both he and his father came into friendly relations with Hiram, king of the great and famous Canaanite city of Tyre. Thus we see that, with the rise of the royal house of David, Israel is coming into closer association with the original city life of Canaan. Before the time of David the prominent characters in Israelite history come from the country; but after that time the absence of great rustic men from the history is as noticeable as their earlier prominence. It is true that in the period after David we have to reckon with such rural men as Elijah, and Elisha, and Amos; but these form a notable exception which proves the rule, for they arise in the country to protest against the city.

We have now reached a point where it is possible effectively to show the conditions under which Canaanite Baalism became a factor of increasing prominence in Israel's religious life. The cities of the land, as already pointed out, were great centers of Baal-worship long before the

invasion; and it was precisely these Baal centers which the Israelites were unable to reduce. The first chapter of Judges mentions about twenty such places, not merely in one locality, but widely distributed from north to south. The largest and most important were Ibleam, Taanach, Bethshean, Megiddo, Nahalol, Rehob, Beth-horon, Gezer, Shaalvim, Dor, Aijalon, Gibeon, Shechem, and Jerusalem. Surviving the invasion, most of them reappear at later points in the narrative. The Canaanite populations which lived in and near these places, and which were slowly amalgamated with Israel, were the main force perpetuating the Baal cults; while after the union of country and city under the house of David the old Canaanite centers, now Israelite in name, and partly so in blood through intermarriage, naturally acted as points of diffusion whence Baalism spread to the newer Israelite cities, like Ophrah, Bethel, etc.

Adoption of the Baal-cult of another city is seen in the case of Solomon, who married foreign wives and built temples

in Jerusalem for their gods; and in the case of Ahab, who married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre, and built a temple to the Tyrian Baal in the city of Samaria. The common liberal attitude in this regard is also illustrated by Amaziah, who sent from Samaria to inquire before Baal-Zebub, the god of the city of Ekron.⁵ In view of such instances, it is easy to see how the surviving cities of old Canaan acted as points from which the Baal-cults were spread throughout all the cities of Israel.

There is, of course, no reason to suppose that, after the rise of David, Baalism was rigidly confined to the cities. All that our proposition contemplates is that Baalism centered for a long time in the cities, while, in contrast, the Yahweh-cult had its great stronghold in the rural districts. This condition must have obtained until the accession of Jehu, the candidate of the rustics, in the middle of the ninth century B. C. The rise of this vulgar cavalry officer on the floodtide of rustic reaction

⁵ 2 Kings 1 : 2.

against the cities marked a turning-point in the social history. From this time the Yahweh-cult became as important in the cities as in the rural districts. At the same time, the political significance of the free peasantry in the country declined more and more with the further concentration of landed property, which was hastened by the Syrian wars. The revolution of Jehu made Israel as a whole, city and country, more thoroughly than before "the land of Yahweh." But this was only a *ritual* fact. The social problem steadily developed in the direction already taken.⁶

This further combination of circumstances at length brought into bold relief the forces crudely expressed by the movement of country against city. That movement was the vital fact in the first stage of Yahwism. It largely succeeded in the realm of ritual; but it failed of its real purpose. With the breakdown of the

⁶ Dr. G. A. Smith, referring to the century after Jehu, speaks of "city life developing at the expense of country life" (*Book of the Twelve Prophets* [New York], Vol. I, p. 42).

farmers' campaign, the religion of Israel passed into a higher and more spiritual stage. Yahwism versus Baalism came to signify, not merely rustic right against city wrong, but good in general against evil in general. And it was to give expression to this wider and mightier struggle within the social body that the literary prophets arose.

We are, then, to regard the farmers' movement as one stage in the evolution of Yahwism. Although it involved a narrow moral protest, its ritual character is suggested by the deuteronomic proposition that if Israel worshiped Yahweh, all kinds of material good would be showered upon the people; whereas, if they served other gods, corresponding evil would be sent upon them. This materialistic way of looking at the situation was a necessary historical step. The deuteronomic proposition found sufficient proof in the now full-fledged tradition that Yahweh had given Israel the entire Holy Land at a single stroke. It is illustrated in the case of those who, in the time of Jeremiah, said

in substance: "We burned incense to the queen of heaven, and had good things; but since we ceased burning incense to her, we have had evil."⁷ That the rustic reaction partook mostly of this common materialistic character there can be little doubt. In no other way could there have been developed that ritual "zeal" (whereof Jehu boasted) which was a necessary condition of the further building up of Israel's religion. The rural-urban struggle furnished the *symbols*—Yahwism versus Baalism—under which, with a different emphasis, the succeeding phase of the religious process found expression. Into these symbols, as we shall now see, the prophets who worked between the revolution and the exile read a profounder moral meaning than Elijah possibly could have conceived.

⁷ Jer. 44: 17, 18.

XIII

THE WRITING PROPHETS

The revolution of Jehu brought no relief to the farmers, and spent itself in the realm of Israel's religious conceptions. For further development of doctrine we are thrown upon later history. The earlier parts of the books of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah date from the century after Jehu. In these writings we find that the problem already outlined is taking on the chronic form which has been characteristic of the Orient for many centuries.

The fact that the Yahweh movement is originally based on the reaction of country against city comes out over and over again in the works of the literary prophets. We have seen that Elijah, the first great man connected with this movement, came from the Gilead region, where life remained primitive down to a late period; and that his successor Elisha was called to the prophetic office from the plow-handles.

The earlier of the literary prophets were likewise men from outside the cities.

Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees.¹ Going to the city of Bethel, he preached against the sins of the people.² It is the rich women of the city of Samaria—"the kine of Bashan," as he calls them—who uphold their husbands in crushing the poor and oppressing the needy.³ It is in the cities Bethel and Gilgal that Israel transgresses and multiplies transgressions.⁴ It is from these and other cities that Israel is warned.⁵ Yahweh will deliver up the city and all that is therein.⁶ It is no wonder that Amaziah the priest cried to Amos, and said, "Preach not any more at Bethel."⁷

A contemporary prophet, Hosea, plainly shows aversion to the city and love for the country: He applies the word "Canaanite" to the city merchants, or traffickers. This contracted usage is all that remains to a word which once indi-

¹ Amos 1:1; 7:14.

² Amos 7:10.

³ Amos 4:1.

⁴ Amos 4:4.

⁵ Amos 5:4 f.

⁶ Amos 6:8.

⁷ Amos 7:12.

cated the entire land. The cities of Canaan, we remember, were not conquered by the tribes of Israel; and after city and country had fused into a single state, the word remained in popular speech in the sense just noted. "As for the Canaanite," says Hosea, "the balances of deceit are in his hand. He loveth to defraud. And Ephraim [northern Israel] said, Surely I am become rich. I have found me wealth." The antithesis of this reproachful reference to the wealth of the cities brings out clearly the sympathies of Hosea, for, continuing, he puts these words in the mouth of Yahweh: "I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents."⁸

The prophet Micah hailed from an agricultural village in the Shephelah, where, as Professor G. A. Smith observes, "there are none of the conditions or of the occasions of a large town."⁹ "The voice of Yahweh," says Micah, "crieth

⁸ Hos. 12: 7, 8, 9; cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea* (New York, 1905), pp. 384-88.

⁹ G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets* (New York), Vol. I, p. 377.

unto the city."¹⁰ "I will cut off the cities of thy land."¹¹ According to this prophet, the sins of the people are symbolized by Samaria and Jerusalem, the capital cities of north and south.¹² Micah looks forward to a golden age of rustic happiness, when "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree."¹³

The message of the prophets, then, was formulated in the rural districts. But at last, in the person of Isaiah, the Yahweh party entered the cities. As he appears in his writings, Isaiah belongs to the city. His great successor, Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, was likewise an inhabitant of Jerusalem during his public career; but it is interesting to note that he was born in the country village of Anathoth, where lay the lands of his family.¹⁴

¹⁰ Mic. 6:9.

¹¹ Mic. 5:11.

¹² Mic. 1:5.

¹³ Mic. 4:4; cf. Zeph. 3:1; 1:16, "Woe to the oppressing city! The Day of Yahweh is a day of alarm against the fortified cities and high battlements."

¹⁴ Jer. 1:1; 32:6 f. Like Amos of rustic Tekoa, going to Bethel to preach against the sins of the city, so Jeremiah from rural Anathoth feels impelled to preach against the sins of the city of Jerusalem: Jer. 2:1.

The works of the literary prophets of this period are of immense interest and importance. In them we trace, practically at first hand, many of the great formative influences that contributed to the development of the Old Testament religion in its final form. It is true that these writings bear the marks of post-exilic editing; but they are not so extensively done over and systematized as the pentateuchal books and the historical narrative in Judges-Kings. When we read the works going under the names of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, we are in contact with material that took form before the Pentateuch in its present shape was heard of, and before the narrative in Judges-Kings had become a part of sacred literature. There was no Bible in the days of these prophets. The only "word of *Elohim*" which they knew was the "*tora* of Yahweh," the living word, which was uttered by themselves and other holy men who were thought to be in some sense mouthpieces, or preachers, for the Divine

Majesty.¹⁵ In their day there was no Pentateuch, with its detailed laws, minute directions, and striking predictions. The prophets were always looking for strong points of appeal in their preaching to Israel; and if such a work had existed, it is inconceivable that these preachers, the spokesmen of that Yahweh who did nothing "without revealing his secret unto his servants the prophets,"¹⁶ should not have known of it and constantly appealed to it. We refer to this cardinal position of modern biblical criticism, not to argue for it, but in order to bring into the present study something of the atmosphere in which men like Amos and Isaiah lived and worked.¹⁷

¹⁵ Cf. W. R. Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (New York, 1891), pp. 292 f.

¹⁶ Amos 3:7.

¹⁷ We do not deny that many, perhaps most, of the laws, customs, and traditions now in the Pentateuch were already in the life of Israel. Nor do we deny that the historical materials lying at the basis of the Judges-Kings narrative were in existence in some form before the exile. In fact, these histories profess to be based on earlier written sources, which are often specified. We simply stand on the critical proposition which affirms that these laws, customs,

The writings of the prophets are not systematic productions. They seem at first glance to be mere waste-basket collections. But careful study shows that, in spite of their superficial disorder, they are bound into organic unity by certain general ideas to which they give nervous and oftentimes broken utterance.

Like Elijah, the literary prophets were united in demanding faithfulness to Yahweh. But in the times of these men the preaching of Elijah and the resulting revolution of Jehu lay far enough in the past for them to see that mere physical faithfulness to Yahweh was of no avail as a remedy for Israel's troubles. Although the bloody revolution of Jehu counted thus for nothing practical, it was of unspeakable importance in the development of religion. It drove the Yahweh people into clearer expression of their views. It made them "show their hand," so to speak. The real purpose of the country party in the campaign of Elijah and Eli-

traditions, myths, and histories were not worked up into an authoritative sacred literature until after the exile.

sha, and the revolution of Jehu, was not disinterested "zeal" for Yahweh, but extremely interested zeal for themselves. We have already pointed out that there is not, and cannot be, such a thing as disinterestedness in the popular understanding of the term. There must be a fundamental element of egoism within or behind that which we call by other names. Our historical study thus far is enough to show the egoistic purpose lying behind the reaction of the country against the city in Canaanitish-Israel; and the literary prophets bring that purpose into bold relief.

As a result of the movement culminating in the revolution of the ninth century, Israel now paid more attentive service to Yahweh than at any earlier period. So far as mere physical faithfulness to the national god was concerned, the rustic party was thus in a large degree successful. So much was this true that the prophets of the eighth and subsequent centuries found it necessary to bear less and less on the issue between Yahweh and

other gods, and to emphasize more and more the issue between right and wrong ways of serving Yahweh himself. It was not ritual faithfulness to him that was alone demanded, however important that might be in itself. To the prophets it becomes foolishness that Israel should look to ritual measures for help in trouble. Jeremiah tells the people that it avails nothing if they have the temple of Yahweh, and do not execute justice between man and man.¹⁸ Amos declares Yahweh's hatred of their feasts, their solemn assemblies, and their sacrifices, coupling this with a demand for justice and righteousness.¹⁹ Physical faithfulness to Yahweh, and casting out of other gods was useless if men continued to do evil to each other. Men themselves must be righteous. The work of the prophets, in brief, was to unite the ideas of Yahweh-worship and personal righteousness. They practically identified ethics and religion. In their teaching, conduct overshadowed cult.

There is no dark mystery about the

¹⁸ Jer. 7: 4, 5.

¹⁹ Amos 5: 21 f.

prophetic association of righteousness with the Yahweh-cult. The god of Israel was a covenant god, who, unlike the nature-gods, had chosen his people, and done them good, raising them up from nothing to royal estate under David and Solomon. Whoever, therefore, did evil to Israel was plainly working in flat opposition to the national god. The bad man, according to the prophets, was destroying "the inheritance of Yahweh." He was tearing down what the good Yahweh had built up. The covenant *Elohim* of Israel was good in the very depths of his nature; and his primary demand upon his people was that they be good also.²⁰

We have seen that the moral imperative—the demand for goodness on the part of others—is a universal fact. We find it in all societies at all periods of history. We are, therefore, assured at the outset that the prophets of Israel had no patent on the cry for righteousness. It surrounded them like the atmosphere.

²⁰ The Hebrew term rendered "lovingkindness" (*hesed*, חֶסֶד) comes within this general conception; but we have no space to enlarge upon it here.

The simple fact is that Israel was in a situation that lent itself historically to this universal demand upon the others for good. Every man, at one time or another, has a case against somebody; most people have chronic cases against the world; and here, for the first time in history, a large number of men were able to make a plausible claim that God (*Elohim*) was on their side in their case against the others. The prophetic movement gave expression to this demand. In Israel we must recognize the universal as taking on a particular form which has commended itself to future ages.

The monotheism of the prophets, equally with their ethics, is based on conditions plain enough when once perceived. From Amos onward, Yahweh is presented, not as the only existing god, but as the Supreme One, the Lord of lords and God of gods. We have already observed the social and political circumstances, in the earlier history of Israel, which lay behind the "increase of Yahweh." The literary prophets put further

touches upon the conception. Their theology, however, was plainly incidental, and subordinate, to their social preaching. They made use of Yahweh as a magnet wherewith to draw the people into conduct which they thought would solve the social problem; and it was but natural, under such conditions, that they should present the god of Israel in the most alluring and powerful character possible. In so doing, they unconsciously strained to the uttermost the conception of Yahweh as god of heaven and earth.

The hope of Israel, as developed in the later prophets, anticipated a final utopia. The glories of the united kingdom of David and Solomon were to return with added glory; and the people were to live under a king who was the Anointed of Yahweh—the Messiah. The so-called “messianic hope” looked forward to a political king reigning over a kingdom of rightness.

XIV

THE EXILE AND AFTER

The prophets had been preaching more than a century when the principal inhabitants of the northern kingdom were carried away into a captivity from which they never returned (722 B. C.). Judah, the southern kingdom, was now left as the sole representative of Israel. But in the early part of the sixth century the principal inhabitants of Judah were carried into the famous Babylonian exile. The troubles of Israel had now culminated in utter loss of national existence. Thus the prophets were finally justified in their claim that worship of other gods beside Yahweh brought evil.

After an enforced absence of about fifty years, many of the exiled Judeans and their children were permitted to return. In dependence upon the sovereignty of Persia, Israel was reconstituted under the

form of the Jewish state, with its capital at Jerusalem.

From the standpoint of cult, the net effect of the exile was to fasten Yahwism upon Israel more firmly than ever. If we look at the facts from the cult standpoint alone, the prophetic movement was a great success; for in all the world there have never been more fanatical devotees than the post-exilic Judeans. A beginning in this direction was made by the revolution of Jehu, wherein foreign gods were cast out. Other pre-exilic spasms of reform carried the purification further. Finally the exile itself completed the process: Israel flung all other worships "to the moles and to the bats." A faithfulness to Yahweh which included abhorrence of all other gods became the sign of Jewish integrity. This was not sentiment. It was a practical proposition.

But although the prophetic movement was at length successful in the realm of cult, it failed of any large issue in reforming the life of the people; for the social problem after the exile was the same as

before. Landed property concentrated in the hands of a small wealthy class, under which the masses lived in economic dependence.

The religious conceptions of Israel after the exile were undoubtedly an advance upon religious conceptions before that period. Pre-exilic religion was a practical polytheism. But the official religion of post-exilic Israel was a practical monotheism.

The religion of Israel, as finally established after the exile, while in advance of pre-exilic ideas and practices, was incomplete. A few mountain-top souls, like Jeremiah, transcended its limitations; but at the most it offered only the raw-material of a universal faith. On the whole, the religion of the Old Covenant, in spite of its implicit outreach to something nobler, was a religion of direct egoism. A New Covenant, or Testament, involving the general principle of altruism, was necessary to complete the process begun under the older system.

XV

JESUS OF NAZARETH

The expansion of Israel's faith into a form fit for the world at large was accomplished in the experience of Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth. The central fact in the experience of Jesus was his new consciousness of the Divine Majesty. He boldly declares that before his time the world has not known God. "Father, the world knew thee not; but I knew thee. No one knoweth the Father but the Son. No one knoweth who the Father is save the Son."¹ This is the vastest and most daring proposition ever laid down by a religious teacher. Jesus was plainly aware that his consciousness of the Divine was new to men. Yet to him it was an expression of an ancient fact.

The solution of this paradox of a new-old God is to be found in the domain of

¹ John 17:25; Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; cf. John 7:28, 29; 15:21.

sociology. The great historical period lying between the Old and New Testaments was required to produce the psychology of Jesus.

In the early stages of social evolution it is the heads of families, the leaders of the "fathers' houses," who alone constitute the legal element of the community. The supremacy of fatherhood is a universal fact in primitive society. It was the fathers in the early days that were the chief warriors and defenders of the people. Since the gods were developed, along the lines of ancestor-worship, from dead chiefs and leaders, it is not remarkable that they should be represented as partaking of the general character of early chiefs. The ancient gods were thus primarily war-gods. Yahweh was a god of barbarian tribes which attacked and occupied the lands of other people, and which were in turn compelled to defend themselves against repeated invasion. It was Yahweh who led the people in these wars. Their battles are called "the battles of Yahweh." And Yahweh him-

self is called "a man of war." A common title given to him is that of "god of hosts, mighty in battle." As a general proposition, Old Testament theology was a reflection of Old Testament sociology.

But in the time between the Old and New Testaments the evolution of society passed through important stages. A great industrial and commercial class arose. This class—the plebeians—fought for political rights, and at length secured a voice in the government alongside the old family nobility. Rome led the way in this; but the development was general. The earlier system of government, founded on the fathers' houses, gave way to a system founded on property, regardless of descent. Governmental activities and political rights, although open to fathers, no longer pertained to them in their paternal character. A citizen under the new order of things did not necessarily belong to an ancient noble family. Crowded out of the political sphere, fatherhood, no longer associated with war, grew more industrial,

peaceable, and lovable. This far-reaching social change was first realized in the civilizations of Greece and Rome; and the influence and rule of these countries at length extended all around the Mediterranean. Israel was drawn into a new world. The growth of commerce and industry found expression in the rise of new cities and the growth of old ones. "Nothing strikes the student more forcibly than the number of new cities that now come to the front. The old towns when conquered or surrendered are rebuilt and reorganized. By their side many new ones spring into existence. The kings are pre-eminently patrons of these cities. Alexander himself is said to have founded more than sixty in his brief career. The number founded by his successors rises into the hundreds. In Palestine, as elsewhere, old and new cities received the Greek organization."²

Jesus grew up in an artisan family in the city of Nazareth, an important indus-

² H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History* (New York, 1903), p. 417.

trial center. The father was a carpenter; and the son followed the paternal business until about the age of thirty. It is instructive to note that, while the Old Testament religion was largely developed in the country, the New Testament religion evolved in the city. Although in Jesus the terms of religion were at length liberated from dependence upon any one element of society, the standpoint of early Christianity was distinctly urban. Not only was Jesus a city man, but the disciple through whose labors the new faith was spread abroad in the world was Paul of Tarsus, "no mean city."³ The disciples were first called Christians in the city of Antioch.⁴ The epistles of Paul are directed mostly to city churches in such industrial and commercial centers as Corinth and Rome. One of our principal terms for non-Christian religions is derived from the Latin noun *pagus*, meaning the country districts. The religions in the Roman Empire which were opposed to Christianity are known collectively as

³ Acts 21 : 39.

⁴ Acts 11 : 26.

“paganism,” the religion of the rural classes. The implication of this term is that Christianity was early identified with city rather than with country.

The religious consciousness of Jesus was an outgrowth of social evolution working upon the conceptions of the Old Testament. Studying the sacred books of his people, he found the God of Israel described, on the one hand, as a father, and, on the other, as ruler of heaven and earth. Jesus read back into the word “father,” which had been applied to Yahweh in the days of old, all the wealth of meaning with which the subsequent evolution of society had invested this term. If Yahweh were both Father and God of all, as the prophets affirmed, then he must be everything that was *now* implied in the ideal of fatherhood; he must be the Paternal Superlative, the loving Father of every man, regardless of nationality or station in life. This was a simple step to take; yet nobody had really taken it before the time of Jesus in the wholehearted way that he took it. By giving

himself to thoughts of God in this character, and by spending long hours alone in fasting and prayer, he developed a new standard of religious life. From the outlook thus acquired, he calmly announced that the world had not hitherto known the Divine, and that his own experience (i. e., an experience like his) must henceforth be the way in which God and man should associate.⁵

Jesus plainly realized that no one had ever laid hold upon the Divine as he did; but, since there was no science of historical sociology in his day, he was unable to explain this fact, and probably he did not even speculate about it. In both the synoptic and the Johannine accounts, different as they are, Jesus appears as one in

⁵ The affirmation, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," should be read in the light of the symbolism which Jesus himself, or the writer of John (it makes no difference which), employs in the preceding sentence, i. e., "I am the Way," etc. When Jesus declares, "I am the Way," he can only be speaking in the figure, "My life—my attitude—is the Way." Therefore, when he goes on to say, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," he means that we cannot fellowship with the Divine (nor with each other, for that matter) save by the way which his experience illustrates.

whom the sense of history is lost in a deeper sense of the immediate reality whereof historical phenomena are but a passing manifestation.

The new doctrine of divinity involved in its very essence a new doctrine of humanity. Jesus could not have his consciousness of God without having a correlative consciousness of man. The universal divine fatherhood implied a universal human brotherhood. If God were the loving Father of all, then all men were neighbors and brothers, regardless of race or nationality.⁶

At a time when such conceptions had never been seriously entertained, Jesus both preached and practiced them in a way that touched men more profoundly than any other appeal in all history. He

⁶ We are not, of course, attempting in this limited space a rounded philosophy of Jesus. Yet the present interpretation is written in a spirit of protest against any view which sets up an antithesis between Jesus and the rest of humanity by postulating in him an element of mystery which is not common to us all. This matter is discussed a little more fully in the writer's *Examination of Society*, pp. 206-20; and it will be exclusively treated in the volume already announced under the title *The Psychology of the Prophets*.

taught that men must *find* themselves by *losing* themselves in the mutual service of a society consisting of God and men. In him the ethical protest of the older prophets was wholly freed from its dependence upon local conditions. In him the moral imperative was expressed in universal terms.

Jesus regarded himself as the true fulfilment of the older prophecy, the Messiah, the Anointed One; the king who should rule in righteousness; the moral and spiritual, rather than the material, completion of his people's hope.

XVI

THE PRACTICAL ISSUE

Granting these propositions, the ultimate question is: What is the practical issue? What *good* are they for us, here and now? This is not an illegitimate inquiry. It is eminently proper. Coming up, as it must, in the mind of everybody who will read this essay, it supplies incidental proof of the egoistic proposition. We formulate the practical issue of the study as follows:

As we have already emphasized, the reaction between self and other is primarily individualistic. Whatever be the evil encountered in society, it is thus cavalierly ascribed to this or that other. The bad situation is charged up to the bad will of some individual or individuals. And the remedy is lightly assumed to lie always in the reformation of people *as individuals*. The reaction between self and other is largely conditioned by what

may be called "negative perception." When this condition exists, we perceive *that* a certain thing is done by the other, but we fail to grasp the entire situation in which the other stands. In such cases our perceptions are virtually reports containing unanalyzed material. Hence the dialectic of the reaction between self and other is often invalid. There will always be a place for individualism; but it does not have the place widely assigned it on the basis of common perceptions; and the progress of thought must readjust it within a broader and truer perspective.

In view of these facts, the problem before society is primarily psychological. A change of attitude with reference to the whole social question, past and present, is imperatively demanded. The solution of social problems in the future—so far as their settlement is possible—waits upon enlarging insight into the total human process.

The church has undoubtedly been the most popular moral institution of all history; and for this reason discussion of

the social problem can be made to center more effectively about the church than around any other social fact. It is in the world's predisposition to a purely individual morality that we find the secret of the popularity of the ethics of the church. The ethical attitude of the church gathers up the moral notions of men, and reflects these notions back on the social mass. It is not the church that has planted the ideas of good and evil in society. It is society that has produced the church. Religious institutions manifest and express one phase of the life of associated men. It needs to be iterated and reiterated that the ethics of the church are not peculiar to it. The church, as a moral institution, mostly takes up, and gives official standing to, the universal secular reaction of the self against the others.

The historical assumption of the church, tacit or avowed, has been that the world's evil (aside from purely physical evil) arises out of individual bad will. The development of both the Jewish and Christian churches has been attended, on

the moral side, with protest merely against individual sins. The church has never committed itself to any proposition recognizing the organic nature of society. It has proclaimed, in effect: "Society is a mere crowd. If the crowd is to be set right, its units must be set right individually. Let every citizen become a better citizen and a better man; and then the crowd, society, the world, will be all right." In effect, the church occupies the position of one who insists that for the operating of a steam-engine all we need is individual righteousness and brotherly love. By concentrating attention upon individualism, and emphasizing this to the exclusion of other standpoints, the church has practically thrown the weight of its large official influence in denial of the organic nature of society. It has been innocent of a sociological outlook. No counter-claim, however strenuous, can break the tremendous force of this fact. Even in the Christian church the idea of brotherhood, and of membership in each other, has had no effect on the search for

the grounds of social problems. The ethical protest of the church—Jewish and Christian, Catholic and Protestant—has in all ages ignored the organic nature of society, and has thus helped to conceal the fact that the world's problems are partly based on defects of the social system.

Of course, the philosophical student of society cannot, with extreme radicals, find here the evidence of some vast conspiracy against human progress. It must be insisted that the ethical attitude of the church reflects the ethical attitude of society. The church is what it is, because society is what it is; and the church-problem is really the world-problem. Radicals who imagine the church to be cleverly interposing a bar to progress are not radical enough. They give the church too much credit for insight. The point we are trying to make in this final part of our essay is that present official institutions of religion must be freed from the conventional individualism in ethics.

Let us not be understood as implying the futility of the religious phase of social evolution. The religious process itself can be treated from several points of view; and our criticism refers only to one aspect of the process.

Looking back over the course of religious development, a number of distinct stages project themselves into view. Each stage was ushered in by a revolution which abolished an old evil and secured a new good. The religious process has worked out in logical order, and could not have taken any other course than that actually followed.

The rise of the heathen cults was an important and useful movement; for they supplied centers of social coherence and authority, as well as met real spiritual needs in the domain of personality. But the local cults of heathenism are not capable of indefinite service; and in the following stage they embody positive social abuses. The correction of these evils was accomplished by the rise of the Old Testament religion on the wreck of the earlier

heathenism. This was, in effect, a vicarious achievement on behalf of the world. The value of the Old Testament stage lies in the triumph of the principle that human problems are to be attacked, not by burning incense to Deity in the hope that Deity will set things right, but by men trying to right things themselves. It was inevitable that the principle of self-help should come into the world in purely individualistic form, since there was no sociology in the days of the prophets. In the following stage, marked by the appearance of the Christian church, the principle of human struggle for righteousness is emphasized anew from the standpoint of more liberal conceptions of divinity and humanity. And in the next stage the Protestant Reformation establishes the right of private judgment. If we live in a universe in which spiritual values preponderate over all else, then this process (going on within the total social process) has not been futile. It must have an eternal significance, not merely for present actors, but for all personality. Not only must

earlier ages work for later generations; but posterity must make achievement for those that have long since left the temporal stage, "that apart from us they should not be made perfect."¹

All these beneficent revolutions, however, lie in the past. The church now faces a condition which, whatever it may have in common with earlier conditions, involves practically a new problem. It needs to be emphasized that the world of today is not the world of the Old Testament prophets, nor of the New Testament prophets, nor of the Protestant reformers. We are not living in the days of Elijah, nor Amos, nor Isaiah, nor Jesus, nor Paul, nor Luther. And if we try to meet the new problems by falling back on the old formulas, we shall utter commonplaces that have no practical application to present difficulties.

Again, let us not be understood as advocating enlistment of the church in some concrete readjustment of the social system. The claim here is that the mo-

¹ Heb. 11:40.

mentum of the religious enterprise in modern society goes against a scientific interpretation of today's problems; and that herein is involved a crisis equal in importance to any of the earlier crises in social history. Surprising as it may appear to some, the problem of today's church is not primarily intellectual, but *moral*. Settlement of the purely intellectual questions of religious faith is implicit in resolution of the moral crisis. The present decline in the influence and prestige of official religion issues from this great moral fact.

It is useless to try to dodge this difficulty by claiming that the church is concerned with "the relation between God and man," and that it has no immediate interest in social problems. If this be a church theory, it certainly is not a church practice. The official claim is that the church is an agency for ushering in the kingdom of God, and setting the world right. Surely, this is a very ambitious object. In fact, no movement of social reform ever acknowledged a vaster pur-

pose. And yet, on the whole (we do not say there are no personal exceptions), the church is not hospitable to reforms based on radical analysis of society. Although one of the professed objects of the church is to set the world right, nobody is quicker than the "pillars" of the church to cast slurs on "world-menders." However prompt the church may be to take refuge in its transcendental functions when the social problem is raised, it is never backward about denunciation of individual sin as the one root of the social problem.

Whether it is possible to modify the direction of attention in the church is a vital question. We have not given this phase of the subject sufficient thought to venture a final opinion. It would be too much at present to take either a positive or a negative attitude. What is needed is full and frank discussion, academic and popular, in the light of modern thought and knowledge.

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